



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

GOOD-BYE SWEETHEART

By the Author of
"RED AS A ROSE IS SHE"



600053304L



"GOOD-BYE. SWEETHEART!"

A Tale.

BY

RHODA BROUGHTON,

AUTHOR OF

"COMETH UP AS A FLOWER," AND "RED AS A ROSE IS SHE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON.

1872.

(All rights reserved.)

249. y. 427.



CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

PART I.

MORNING.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. WHAT JEMIMA SAYS . . .	3
II. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	18
III. WHAT JEMIMA SAYS . . .	32
IV. WHAT LENORE SAYS . . .	47
V. WHAT JEMIMA SAYS . . .	69
VI. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	79
VII. WHAT JEMIMA SAYS . . .	96
VIII. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	116
IX. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	142
X. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	152
XI. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	170
XII. WHAT JEMIMA SAYS . . .	189

CHAP.	PAGE
XIII. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	206
XIV. WHAT JEMIMA SAYS . . .	232
XV. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	243
XVI. WHAT JEMIMA SAYS . . .	278
XVII. WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS . . .	294

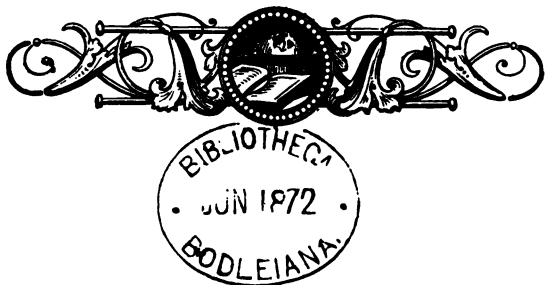
P A R T I.

“ Being so very wilful, you must go.”

MORNING.

“ The sleepless Hours, who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-enwoven canopies
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,
Waken me when their mother, the grey Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.”





“GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART!”

CHAPTER I.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.

AKINGLY June day: the hay-smell drowning all other smells in every land of Christendom: battling even with the ingeniously ill odours of this little drainless Breton town. People who suffer from hay-fever are sneezing and blowing their noses; all the world else is opening its nostrils wide. The small *salon* of a small French boarding-house: a narrow room with a window at each end; and

in this room we two sisters, the two Misses Herrick.

Five minutes ago, the mistress of the establishment entered and closed the *persiennes* of one of our windows, to hinder the sun from *abimer*-ing the *cretonne* curtains, as she said. She was about to follow suit with the other, and only desisted on our eager and impassioned representations that not even a Breton sun can shine from all points of the compass at once. Through the one casement thus left us Lenore is leaning out; Lenore, our youngest-born, the show one of our family. On her elbows she is leaning, looking idly into the little grass-grown *place*, on which Mdlle. Leroux's *pension* gives. Jemima—I am Jemima—is making a listless reconnoitre of the furniture. The little cheap prints on the walls, ‘La Religieuse défendue,’ ‘Le Guerrier pansé,’ ‘Napoleon I., Empereur des Français,’ one long fern frond, and a single fox-

glove in a wineglass on the mantelshelf ; bare cold parquet to the feet. Jemima is twenty-eight years of age, and very good-natured ; at least, so people say. I have often noticed that the eldest of many families are, physically speaking, failures. Jemima is, physically speaking, a failure.

“ How one misses one’s five-o’clock tea,” says Lenore, looking back half over her shoulder to throw this and the succeeding remarks at me ; “ from ten-o’clock breakfast till six-o’clock dinner, what a dreary waste ! How do you suppose the aborigines stave off the pangs of hunger, Jemima ? Do they chew a quid of tobacco, or a piece of chalk, or what ? ”

I reply, laconically, “ Biscuits.”

“ Does not your soul yearn for one of those open tarts with fresh strawberries we saw yesterday at the *patissier’s* in the Rue de St. Malo ? Mine does. I wish I had asked Frederic to bring me one.”

“ And do you imagine,” ask I, sardonically, “that you have reduced that poor man to such a pitch of imbecility as to induce him to carry about jam-tarts in his coat-pocket for you ?”

Lenore smiles : she has that very sweet smile which is, they say, the peculiar attribute of ill-tempered people. “ I think,” she answers, “that he is not far from being on a level with Miss Armstrong’s lover, who allowed her to dress him up as a sheep, and lead him by a blue ribbon into a room full of company.”

Lenore’s face is more round than oval ; it is fresh as a bunch of roses gathered at sunrise—fresh, but not ruddy ; her nose, though not in the least *retroussé*, belongs rather to the family of upward than that of downward tending noses ; her eyes are grey, as are the eyes of nine-tenths of the Anglo-Saxon race ; large, though not with the *owlish* largeness of a ‘ Book of Beauty,’

wherein each eye is double the size of the prim purse mouth ; in her two cheeks are two dimples that, when she is grave, one only suspects, but that, when she laughs or smiles, deepen into two little delicious pitfalls, to catch men's souls at unawares in.

" If Frederic were anybody but Frederic," say I, sinking into an armchair, and pulling out my knitting—like most failures I'm fond of work—"it would be considered rather *risqué* of us two innocents travelling about the Continent with a young man in our train, even though he is a clergyman."

" If Frederic," replies Lenore, contemptuously turning back to her contemplation of the *place*, and replacing her grey gingham elbows on the sill, "were to be caught in the most flagitious situation one can imagine, that Simon Pure face of his would carry him triumphantly through. Who can connect the idea of immorality and spectacles? Talk of an angel, and you hear

the rustle of wings ; I hear Frederic's wings rustling through the Porte Saint Louis, and—oh ! Jemima—Jemima, quick ! come here !—who is it he has with him ?”

I jump up, as bidden—I always do what Lenore bids me, though I have the advantage, or rather disadvantage, of her by ten years—and look out. “An Englishman, evidently,” I say, sagaciously, “by his beard ; nobody but Englishmen and oysters wear beards now-a-days.”

“Is he going to bring him up here ?” asks Lenore, craning her neck out to look round the balcony of the café next door, where, as usual, two fat men are smoking and drinking coffee. “No ; I see him nodding ; he is saying good-bye ; how tiresome !” (with an accent of disappointment).

“You are as bad as the young lady in Nixon's ‘Cheshire Prophecy,’” say I,

laughing: " 'Mother, mother, I have seen a man !' "

Frederic enters, alone, looking very hot in the rigorous black of a priestly coat that grazes his heel, and the rigorous black of a priestly waistcoat that almost salutes his chin.

" Enter a pretty cockatoo ! " cries my sister, with an insolent laugh, pointing the insult by indicating with her forefinger the curly flourish of fine fair hair that surmounts the young man's forehead and blue spectacles. " Pretty cockatoo ! "

" You should not make personal remarks, Miss Leonora, " answers Frederic, blushing.

" My name is not ' Leonora, ' " retorts she, with a pout ; " don't lengthen my two charming soft French syllables into that great long English mouthful, ' Leonora ! ' "

But Frederic is deeply diving into a pocket in the hinder part of his raiment.

Thence he diffidently draws a little bonbonnière.

“I have brought you some chocolate, Miss Lenore ; that—that is why I called to-day. I—I think I once heard you say that you liked it.”

“My dear cockatoo, I hate the sight of it !” replies she, gravely, with the utter and unconscious ingratitude of a spoiled child. “I ate it every day and at every confectioner’s in Rouen last week. Now, if it had been a strawberry tart—open fresh strawberries ; but it is not—give it to Jemima.”

“Never mind her, Mr. West,” say I, it being my pleasing life-task to mend the breaches made by Lenore in her adorers’ feelings—I never having any breaches of my own to mend—“never mind her. But tell us who your new friend is ; we have been on the *qui vive* ever since we saw you parting so tenderly under the arch.”

“Do you mean the man that came with me to-day as far as the Porte?” asks Frederic, who has sat down upon the music-stool, and is turning slowly round and round, in order to be able to follow with his spectacles Lenore into whatever part of the little room her measured walk may take her.

“But indeed he is no friend of mine,” he adds, uneasily—“no friend at all; a mere acquaintance—a college acquaintance.”

“What is his name?” inquired I, nibbling a stick of Lenore’s despised chocolate, and asking the question more for the sake of something to say than from any particular interest in the subject.

“Le Mesurier.”

“Hem! a good name, isn’t it? And what is he doing here?”

“He is making a walking tour through Brittany with a friend; the friend has gone for two or three days to stay at the

Marquis de Roubillon's château near Dol, and Le Mesurier is to wait for him here."

"Where is he staying at?"

"The Hôtel de la Poste."

"And why did not you bring him up here with you, pray?" asks Lenore, joining in the conversation, and throwing herself indolently on the little hard horsehair sofa as she speaks.

"Because he would not come," answers Frederic, quickly, and I think I detect a grain of malicious triumph in his voice.

Lenore reddens. "I dare say you never gave him the chance."

"On the contrary, I said to him, 'I am going to make a call on some ladies at Mdlle. Leroux's *pension*; will you come too? I do not doubt that they would be very happy to make your acquaintance.' And he said—stay, let me think, I know he worded it very strongly—'Good God!

No! one has enough of women in England.' ”

“ Interesting misogynist ! ” says Lenore, ironically. “ What a sweet—what a holy task it would be to bring him to a healthier frame of mind ! ”

“ I don't really think he would suit you, Miss Lenore, ” says Frederic, nervously, making the music-stool squeak painfully, as he fidgets upon it ; “ he has a way of saying more coolly impertinent things to ladies, in a quiet way, than any man I ever came across. ”

Lenore jumps up into a sitting posture, and a mischievous tormenting look flashes into her laughing grey eyes.

“ My dear Frederic ! how you excite me ! After hearing nothing but how charming I am, from you and such as you, how refreshing to be told impertinent plain truths, in a quiet way too—I like the quiet way ; there's something sly and contraband about

it—by a handsome woman-hater (I'm sure he must be handsome) in a reddish beard !"

"He is a man of anything but a good character," says Frederic, lowering his voice, as if the subject he was broaching were one not fit for ladies' ears—"at least, he was not at Oxford."

Lenore springs to her feet.

"Frederic !" she says, impressively, "you have decided me : I *will* see him !"

"I don't quite see how, Lenore," say I, still nibbling. "Magnificently as you always affect to despise the shackles of conventionality, you can hardly force your acquaintance upon a poor man who has distinctly declined it."

Lenore's two hands are clasped behind her back, as she stands before us. Suddenly she stretches out one of them to Frederic.

"I don't care," she says, with a little

emphatic stamp ; “ I bet you half-a-crown that before nightfall I have seen him !”

“ You know I never bet, Miss Lenore.”

“ Oh, no ! of course not,” drawing herself up very stiffly, and affecting to button a high double-breasted waistcoat ; “ sacred calling—injurious example to flock, etcetera, etcetera.”

“ Never mind her,” say I, recurring to my usual formula of soothing. “ Don’t you know that ever since that unlucky attack of croup she had when she was a child, when the doctor said she was not to be contradicted, and was to do whatever she liked, that Lenore has never been fit to speak to ?”

“ If you see Le Mesurier,” says Frederic, not heeding my blandishments, and getting rather pink with exasperation, “ it will be against *his* will.”

"Very likely, but I shall see him!"

"He is always bored by the society of respectable women; he never makes any secret of it."

"What an uncharitable innuendo for a clergyman to make! Every amiable trait you mention heightens my interest in him! Well, I shall see him!"

"Good-bye, Miss Herrick," cries Frederic, vaulting off his stool (which at parting gives one last valedictory squeak) and picking up his soft dumpling hat—"good-bye, Miss Lenore!"

"Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye!" replies Lenore, rhetorically. "If you are going to the Hôtel de la Poste—do not, however, put yourself out of the way on my account—but if you are going there, you may tell our mutual friend to expect me about four."

Two minutes later the front-door closes on Mr. West, and I hear my sister running 1 - /

downstairs, and calling "Stéphanie—Stéphanie!" at the top of her fresh, gay voice. Stéphanie is the Breton *femme de chambre*.





CHAPTER II.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

LENORE'S bed-room : over the papered walls, a design of blue pea-flowers and giant asters, straggling quaintly, yet prettily ; a small bed in a little recess, curtained off ; a wash-hand basin as big as a broth-bowl, and a ewer as big as a cream-jug ; a minute, dim looking-glass, hung exactly where it is impossible to get anything more than a suggestion of one's own face in it. Before this glass two women are standing, Lenore and Stéphanie ; the first is looking at her-

self, the second is looking at the first. Lenore is no longer an English lady ; she is a Breton peasant. Her waist is girt about with a heavy, black woollen petticoat, gathered into so many great folds at the back and sides, as to make her look as wide-hipped as the weather-beaten country-woman beside her ; a gay little purple shawl-handkerchief pinned over her broad chest. Lenore is a fine woman, not a chicken-breasted pretty slip of a girl ; and on her head (from which the chignon has disappeared) she is struggling with dubious success to arrange a head-dress similar to that worn by her companion.

“ *Oh, que mademoiselle est adroite !* ” cries the latter, with the awful mendacity of a Frenchwoman, when any contest between truth and civility is concerned ; standing, with her hands on the broad hips that nature or her petticoat plaits have given her, looking on.

"Mademoiselle is not *adroite* at all," cries Lenore impatiently, recklessly mingling together the Gallic and Anglo-Saxon tongues. "*Au contraire*, she is very *mala-droite*; *coiffez-moi, Stéphanie, je vous en prie*," sitting down on a chair, and letting her handsome awkward hands fall idle into her lap.

A Breton cap off is one thing—it is merely a straight piece of well-stiffened muslin or net; on, it is quite a different matter. Stéphanie having, for the space of about two minutes, arranged and pinned and tied, bursts into a cascade of shrill French laughter.

"*Mon Dieu!* but Mademoiselle has a droll air! Mademoiselle will pardon her; but, *Dame*, it makes one *pâmer de rire*."

Lenore rises, and putting her face close to the dark mirror, with its disfiguring sidelights, surveys her changed countenance with eager solemnity. A little border of

nut-brown hair, emerging from the crisp white muslin ; the broad stiff lappets, turned up and back, and secured with a pin on the crown, making a huge loop at each side of the head. Why describe what every one knows—that most piquant of headgears that the wise Breton peasantry have not yet abandoned in favour of the mock lace and tawdry cheap flowers of our own lower orders ?

“ Je suis belle, n’est ce pas ? ” she asks, a little doubtfully, peeping over her own shoulder at the grave round beauty of her anxious peach face.

“ Oh, Mademoiselle est belle a ravir ; ça va à merveille ; on ne peut mieux,” &c., &c.

“ But my hands are too white,” breaks in Lenore, stemming the torrent of encomium. “ What will you sell me your nice red fingers for half-an-hour for ? Except on the stage, too, I suppose a peasant-woman does not wear rings ” (slipping

them off on the washhand-stand—dressing-table there is none). "Well" (with a parting glance), "I think I am unrecognisable, am I not, Stéphanie ? I should not know myself if I met myself in a shop-window."

As she passes the salon-door, Lenore peeps in. "Do you know me, Jemima ?" Jemima gives a great start, and her knitting rolls down unheeded on the parquet :

"Why, Lenore, child, what have you been doing to yourself ? What a fright you look ! Where are you going ?"

"To the Hôtel de la Poste," answers Lenore, shutting the door briskly, and running downstairs very quickly to avoid questions or remonstrances.

It is but a five minutes' walk from Mademoiselle Leroux's to the Hôtel de la Poste ; but in five minutes there is plenty of time for courage to ooze out at fingers' ends. Lenore's feet, which at first, despite her heavy peasant boots, bore her along

quickly enough, subside into a very lagging walk. Her bravery is considerably cooled by the time she reaches her destination. An old shabby diligence is standing in the street; on a bench, beside the hotel-door, three men in blue blouses are sitting drinking cider; in the doorway a disengaged garçon, with a napkin under his arm.

“Est ce que c’est ici l’Hôtel de la Poste?” asks Lenore, almost timidly, her question being rendered rather superfluous by the fact of the hotel bearing its name in yard-long letters on its front.

“Oui, Madame. Madame est Anglaise?” with a surprised glance at her dress.

“Yes, Madame is English. Is there much company here now?”

“Ca commence, Madame.”

“Are there any of my compatriots staying here?”

“There are several, Madame—a crowd in fact.”

"Did any of them arrive to-day?"

"Two English messieurs arrived by the *voiture* from Caulnes. If Madame wishes she can see their *malles, qu'on va monter*," pointing inwards to a heap of portmanteaux and hat-boxes. Madame enters and inspects them.

"And where is *this* monsieur?" she asks, pointing with her finger to a small and rather battered portmanteau, bearing the name of "Paul Le Mesurier, Esq.," in large white letters upon it.

"That monsieur is in the *salle*: he has commanded some cognac and a siphon."

As he speaks a second garçon emerges from the unseen, bearing a small tray with the identical refreshments indicated upon it. By a sudden impulse Lenore runs forward to meet him.

"Would it be permitted," she asks, colouring furiously, "for *her* to take that into the *salle*?"

“ Mais oui, Madame, si ça vous convient.”

They both stare at her ; one laughs. If she had been by herself, *now* at this last moment, she would have set down the tray and fled ; but retreat is cut off by the first garçon politely throwing open the *salle* door. With trembling knees and a galloping heart, Miss Lenore enters.

A long room, and long table laid for any number of people ; bottles of *vin ordinaire*, napkins, covered dishes full of emptiness, toothpick stands, pots of mangey hydrangeas and geraniums down the middle ; a little clergyman with falling shoulders that would not have disgraced a woman or a champagne bottle—Frederic in fact—studying an *Indicateur* in one of the windows ; another gentleman at the table, with the back of his head, and a suspicion of a lion-coloured beard, emerging from the sheets of *Galignani*.

As noiselessly as her great clodhopping

boots will permit, Miss Herrick approaches the latter and deposits his cognac at his elbow. But in so doing her hand trembles so much that she knocks down a fork and spoon, which fall with a clink on the floor. As she stoops to pick them up, and as he lifts his eyes, rather irritated at the noise, their glances meet. In Lenore's there is a mixture of expressions : shame, defiance, and above all, and before all, disappointment ; for, after all, this interesting woman-hating *roué* is not handsome : by no one but the mother who bore him could he ever have been thought even good-looking. In the stranger's look there is nothing but extreme surprise—nay, astonishment. Glad, despite herself, to have got off so cheaply, Lenore is beating a hasty retreat, when Le Mesurier's voice overtakes her.

"I say! Marie! Julie! Manon! Hi! What the deuce is the French for 'Hi'? Call her back, West! I have tried all the

names I know; they are generally all Maries, but she wont answer to that."

"Do you want anything?" asks Frederic, looking up innocently from his *Indicateur* with that beamingly benevolent look that spectacles always give. But his friend, excited by the pursuit of a pretty face, has precipitated himself towards the door, which is left ajar; and passing quickly through it finds himself face to face with the object of his search, who, not having had presence of mind to take refuge in flight, is standing there with her empty tray—red, guilty, and beautiful.

"West! West! What's the French for 'What is your name?' Do they grow them like this here? Because, if so, we had better import a few. *Comment vous appelez-vous, ma chère?*" trying to take her hand.

"What *do* you mean?" cries the girl in very good English, snatching it away,

totally forgetting her assumed character, and looking daggers at the insolent wretch who has dared to call her "*Ma chère*."

"Are you English?" asks Le Mesurier, aghast, recoiling a step or two, and his mouth opening in horror as the thought of the admiring familiarities he has just been giving utterance to dart across his brain.

At the sound—hardly credited—of a too well-known voice, Mr. West has thrown down his *Indicateur*, and come running to the scene of action.

"Miss Lenore!"

She looks up at him—a dare-devil light in her eyes—resolute, now that the *dénouement* has come, to brave it out.

"Did Monsieur call?"

"Miss Lenore, are you *mad*?"

She stretches out her hand to him:
"Who was right? I have won my half-crown; pay it me!"

Le Mesurier turns from one to the other in blank astonishment : " I say, West, what is it all about ? what is the joke ?"

" You had better ask this lady."

" There is no joke, none," says the girl, looking at him hardily, but growing crimson. " I came here to see you. I put on this dress to avoid being recognised ; I have failed, that is all."

" To see *me* ! I am sure I am immensely flattered " (looking excessively surprised, and biting his lips hard to repress a broad smile) ; " but are you sure that you are not mistaking me for some one else ?"

" It was not that I cared in the least to see you," she says, frowning, and tears of shame rushing to her eyes.

" Of course not ! of course not !" bowing.

" But when I say that I will do a thing, however foolish, I always do it."

" An excellent rule to go through life

with," replies he gravely, still fighting with a laugh ; " but there are difficulties sometimes in the way of putting it into practice, are not there ?"

" Miss Lenore, Miss Lenore," says Frederic, the veins in his forehead swelling, and all his little pink features working with nervous vexation, " will you allow me to see you home ? If we walk very fast—it is not an hour when there are many people about—perhaps you will not be recognised."

" I don't in the least care if I am recognised," answers Lenore, stoutly. " I have done nothing to be ashamed of."

As she passes out Le Mesurier holds open the door and bows formally and solemnly ; and through the Place Duguesclin and the Fossé, Miss Herrick carries the recollection of a rather ugly tanned face, in which she conjectures the contempt that does not appear—carries away with

her also the pleasant consciousness of having made an utter and unladylike fool of herself, without the poor consolation of having done it amusingly.

“Girl of the Period !” says Paul to himself, thrusting his hands into his coat-pockets as he watches her departure through the lowered venetian blinds. “After all, the *Saturday* does not over-colour. From all such ‘Good Lord deliver us !’ ”



CHAPTER III.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.

AT our *pension* we dine at six ; it is a small and select establishment ; at present it contains only two families—*la famille Lange*, and *la famille Erreeck*. We are *la famille Erreeck*. *La famille Lange* is French, as may be imagined from its name. It consists of a mother, son, and daughter. The mother is a handsome, black-haired widow, mourning jovially for the four-months-dead M. Lange, in uncovered head and huge jet rosary. Madlle. Péroline deplores her

papa, in white muslin, lilac ribbons, and a wonderful mop of little frizzed curls and rolls. M. César is a youth with an eye-glass, which is for ever dropping out of his right eye—a youth tall of stature, and spotted like the pard. We are all dining together as sociably as their total ignorance of our tongue, and our very partial acquaintance with theirs, will permit. Through the open window, in the still yellow evening, we hear plainly the clump of sabots in the *place*, the voices—as often as not English or Irish, for Dinan, as is well known, swarms with both—of the passers-by.

There are but few disadvantageous circumstances in this world that have not also their advantageous side ; and the fact of our being the only people in the house that understand the English tongue enables my sister and me to impart our opinions concerning the company and the viands to each other with a freedom which, to a

stranger entering unacquainted with the posture of affairs, would seem startlingly candid.

"I wish they would let us have our potatoes *with* our *bifteck*, as they call it, instead of afterwards and separate, as a side-dish," say I, grumblingly, being hopelessly John-Bullish in my culinary tastes.

"Look at this nasty fellow!" rejoins Lenore, with a disgusted intonation, directing my attention to her neighbour, M. César, who, with his napkin tucked under his chin, is holding the bone of his mutton cutlet in his hand, and gnawing it. "Do you suppose, Mima, that French *gentlemen* worry their food in such a cannibalish fashion, or is it a manner and custom confined to bourgeois like these?"

My reply is strangled in its birth by the unconscious Madame Lange, who, interrupting for a moment her succulent employment of chasing the gravy round her

tilted plate with a crust, inquires, with some volubility, whether “Mademoiselle has made a promenade to-day? Doubtlessly Mademoiselle has already visited Fontaine des Eaux, and Lehon, and the Saint Esprit—an object, in fact, truly remarkable?”

My French never was my strong point, even in school days; and the waste of many immense years that have elapsed since my education was completed has not tended to make it stronger. I answer slowly, “*Non—pas—aujourd’hui—très—chaud;*” and look piteously across to my junior for succour. But Lenore is still disdainfully eyeing the innocent M. César and his mutton bone.

“Mademoiselle is right; there has been a *chaleur épouvantable*; in truth, she herself has been *très souffrante* all day; she has had *mal au cœur*. My children, however, César and Péroline, have been to play at

the croquet, with the Demoiselles Smeet and the Demoiselles Ammeelton. César loves the croquet ; is it not so, my friend ?"

"*Mais oui*, Maman."

I try to say in French that croquet is the best game that ever was invented for bringing the two sexes together—a trite and pedantic remark at best—and, failing to make myself understood, relapse into silence, feeling rather small, and resolving henceforth for evermore to cleave to the vulgar tongue. Lenore laughs malignantly, but does not help me. M. César, having eaten a huge strawberry mash, and more white-heart cherries than the rest of the company put together, pushes back his chair, and requests to be permitted to retire to make his toilette for a promenade *à cheval*.

On the occasion of M. César's making a promenade *à cheval* we are all expected to group ourselves at the *salon* windows to



watch him, as, in lavender gloves and cream-coloured trousers, he caracoles a little, a very little—for M. César knows that discretion is the better part of valour—under our admiring eyes. His mamma meanwhile is won't to retire into a corner of the room, cover her face with her handkerchief, and cry.

As he passes by her now she catches his hand : “ Great God ! César, take care that that wicked animal does not overturn thee ! ”

“ Fear not, mamma,” replies César, doughtily ; “ I will be careful.”

“ Imagine an Englishman contemplating the possibility of parting company with his horse while ambling along the King's highway ! ” says Lenore, scornfully. “ Hush ! ” (with heightened colour and brightened eyes), “ is not that the hall-door bell ? ”

She runs to the window and looks out.

“ It is Frederic, of course, isn’t it ?” I ask, finishing my last cherry.

“ Yes.”

“ Anybody with him ?”

“ *Anybody with him !* Of course not ! Who should there be ?” replies my sister tartly, from which, being a person of very superior intelligence, I conclude that Lenore expected somebody. We go up to the *salon* to receive our guest, and Lenore, contrary to her usual custom, runs to meet him with outstretched hand, and without any of her usual insults to his hair, his gait, or his physique generally.

“ Well, Frederic !” she cries, eagerly, and, as it seems to me, expectantly.

“ Well, Miss Lenore !” replies Frederic, growing purple to the ears, as he always does when his idol flings him a brace of careless words.

“ Don’t say ‘ Well, Miss Lenore !’ ” retorts my sister, angrily—“ it does irritate

one so. Have you nothing to say?—nothing to tell me?”

“Nothing to tell you?” echoes Frederic, bewildered, and again lapsing into his former offence. “Why, it is such a very short time since we parted, that it is not likely I can have very much to relate.”

Lenore turns away with an ill-tempered movement of head and shoulder, and, walking to the window, looks out. M. César is kissing his lavender gloves repeatedly. Madame Lange is screaming out shrill cautions to her son, not to be too audacious. Mdlle. Lérroux—an adorable old creature, in yellow cap and luxuriant grey beard—is waving her pocket-handkerchief, and crying, “Au revoir! M. César, au revoir!” Lenore does not appear to perceive any of them.

“I suppose,” says Mr. West, addressing me, but glancing timidly towards the window, “that you have heard of Miss Lenore’s

adventure ? I am really in hopes that we shall be able to keep it quite quiet—*quite* quiet. Le Mesurier fortunately knows no one here, and we luckily met no one but Mr. Stevens on our way home, and I don't think he saw us.”

“ If he did see us,” says my sister, turning round her face again, ornamented with a rather grim smile, “ I would not give much for your character in Dinan by to-morrow, Frederic. You will be *affiché* all over the town as having been parading about, in broad daylight, arm-in-arm with a *bonne*. I asked you to give me your arm on purpose. Do you know, Mima” (beginning to laugh), “ we came toddling along so affectionately, like a pair of cits out on a Sunday afternoon ?”

“ You forget that I saw you coming through the Porte,” reply I, with severity ; “ and indeed, Lenore, when next you take it into your head to play a practical joke, I

sincerely hope that it may be a more amusing and less unladylike one."

"Why did you tell us your friend was handsome?" asks Lenore, abruptly, without paying the slightest attention to me.

"I did not say so, Miss Leonora; you said so yourself!"

"*I said so myself!* Why, how could I? I had seen nothing but the back of his neck."

"You said you were sure he must be handsome."

"Well, the wisest of us are liable to error," replies my sister, leaning her folded arms on the back of my chair, and gazing calmly over my head at Mr. West. "In that case I certainly erred egregiously: he is *hideous*—*laid à faire peur*, as Mdlle. Péroline humorously remarked of you the other day."

"In that case, Miss Leonora," replies Frederic, worked up into something like

spirit, as I am glad to perceive, by her rudeness, “there does not seem to be very much love lost between you !”

Lenore blushes angrily. “Has he been expressing his disapprobation of me to you ?” she asks, quickly. “Is it the last new thing in manners to abuse people to their most intimate friends ? If so, commend me to the mannerless *sans-culottes*.”

“I wish you would not get into the habit, Lenore, of larding your conversation with French phrases : it reminds one so much of the *Journal des Demoiselles*.”

This I say in the weak effort to turn the conversation into a new channel : meanwhile I endeavour to signal “Danger !” to Mr. West, cough, and wave the white flag ; but as he is not looking at or thinking of me, it is all in vain.

“I don’t think he had any idea that I was so much atta—, so intimate, I mean, with you and Miss Jemima, as I am,”

replies Frederic, earnestly. "Indeed, Miss Lenore, I must do him that justice."

"Who cares whether he has justice done him or not?" cries Lenore, impatiently. "What did he say? what did he say?"

"It really would not at all amuse you, Miss Lenore," (nervously kneading his soft hat); "on the contrary, I am afraid it would make you very angry."

"You may as well tell me at once," says my sister, composedly sitting down on an arm-chair and folding her hands in her lap, "because you shall never leave this room alive if you don't!"

"Well, since you insist upon it—please, Miss Femima," (turning piteously to me) "please, Miss Femima, bear witness that it is not my fault—that Miss Lenore has brought it on herself—he said (I daresay he did not mean it) that—that—he could not have believed that any English lady

could have lowered herself to such an extent as to do such a thing!"

The blush on Lenore's face grows painful—spreads even to her soft creamy throat.

"Oh, indeed! Anything more?"

"He said," pursues Frederic, deceived by the apparent quietness with which his hearer takes the unflattering comments made upon her, "that if he had ever caught his sister playing such a trick, he would never have spoken to her again as long as she lived."

"Oh, indeed! what a loss for her! Anything more?"

"He said he did not doubt that you were very good fun, if one went in for that sort of thing, but that you were not his style."

"Not his style! am I not?" cries Lenore, rising suddenly from her chair, quivering from head to foot with passion ;

“and what is his style, pray? Whatever it is, thank God that I am not like it. Frederic, I wonder that you are not ashamed to insult me by repeating such speeches! Jemima” (turning eagerly to me), “you can have no conception how ugly he is; I only wish you could see him. Little eyes like a pig’s, and a huge nose, and such a villainous expression! What a fool I am to care what he says! I don’t care—it amuses me immensely—ha, ha! Wretch! I wish he was dead.”

And to prove how little she cares, she bursts into a tempest of tears, rushes out of the room, and bangs the guiltless door behind her.

“There, Mr. West,” say I, not without a certain sombre triumph, “perhaps you will pay some attention to me next time.” And I rise with dignity, and shaking out my brown-holland tail, prepare to follow and comfort my afflicted relative. As I

reach the door I cannon against Madame Lange.

"Péroline, Péroline! where art thou, dear friend? Come and try thy new body. Pardon, Mademoiselle, a thousand pardons!"





CHAPTER IV.

WHAT LENORE SAYS.

“**T**O the day of my death I shall always hate Stéphanie!” says Lenore, lamentably, sitting leaning her elbows on the little round table in the middle of her bedroom, having broken off suddenly in the writing of a letter, to thrust her hands in among her crisp untidy hair, and give way to a fit of angry despondence. “If I had not seen her going clacking about the house in that linsey petticoat and that vile cap” (nodding her head to where the unlucky garments

are lying on her bed), "it never would have entered my head to make a mountebank of myself."

"If I were you," I reply severely, in answer to this jeremiad, "I should buy the whole suit from her, lay it up by me, and look at it whenever I next felt inclined to make a fool of myself."

"It would not do badly for a fancy ball," says Lenore, with a sudden change of tone, from the lachrymose to the lively, rising briskly from her chair, and walking towards the bed ; "much more piquant than the everlasting Fires and Waters, Nights and Days, Louis Quatorzes, and Marie Stuarts, that one is so sick of ; I never yet knew a very ugly woman go to a fancy ball that she did not go as Mary Queen of Scots." An austere silence on my part. "I have a good mind to try" (with considerable cheerfulness of tone). "I must get Stéphanie to give me lessons in the art

of arranging the cap. Let me see ; how did it go ? It looked quite simple." Still silence on my part. "One thing is certain, one would be quite unique ; one would not run the risk of meeting one's double."

"I should not have thought," say I, stiffly, unwilling that the wholesome lesson my sister has learned should so soon be forgotten—"I should not have thought that your associations with that costume were so pleasant that you would be in any hurry to put it on again."

She covers her face with her hands : "How brutal of you to remind me of it, just when I had succeeded in diverting my thoughts from it for a moment!" I say nothing. "You know, Jemima, I had meant it to be just a spirited little freak ; and it all fell so flat, so tame. Pah ! it is a thing that one could not think of without blushing, if one were in a dark room by one's self, with the shutters shut."

“I should think not.”

“Shall I ever forget,” cries Lenore, drawing away her hands from her crimson face, and clasping them together—“shall I ever forget my feelings, as Frederic and I sneaked out together, with our tails between our legs, and *he* held open the door so ceremoniously for us? If he had had any good feeling he would have laughed, would not he, Mima? If he had not been a monster he would have tried to look as if he thought it a good joke, but he did not; he was as grave—as grave as I am now, which is putting it as strongly as I possibly can.”

“Frederic told you that he hated respectable women,” say I, gravely; “so that his want of cordiality was, at least, an indirect compliment.” She stands with her eyes moodily downcast, but does not answer. “He evidently thought you respectable,” I said cheerfully—“*evidently*; that, at least, is a comfort, is not it? I don’t see how he

found it out; it must have been intuition."

Neither does this thrust move her to speech. I begin a fresh sentence: "Frederic said——"

"Frederic!" interrupts Lenore, impatiently stamping, and relieved at having found another object beside herself to vent her rage on. "Little Marplot! If he had never been born, or if he had not been there, or if he had had sense enough to hold his tongue, it would have all gone off well enough, as I meant it. I should have seen Mr. Le Mesurier—not, heaven knows" (with great contempt), "that he is the least worth seeing—and *he*——" She pauses.

"Well, what about *him*?"

She draws in her breath, and her eyes flash spitefully: "If a wish could have killed him at that moment, as he stood there bowing and sneering, and saying that he was afraid there must be some mistake—

he knew as well as I did that there was no mistake—he would have been as dead as a doornail now!" She stops, breathes hard, and clenches, and again unclenches, her hand. "'I'm sure I'm immensely flattered. What is the joke, West? An excellent plan, no doubt.'"

I hear her muttering over to herself these, as I conjecture, fragmentary speeches of her new acquaintance, while her cheeks grow ever more and more hotly red.

"Console yourself," I say, with vicarious philosophy. "I imagine that he did not hear your name; you were so thoroughly disguised by your dress that he probably would not recognize you if he met you; and the world is wide—we shall hardly be so unlucky as to happen upon him again."

"Do you think not?" answers Lenore, with hardly so much exhilaration of tone as might have been expected. "I don't know about that. Brittany is not so very

large, and' everybody goes to see the same places. His route will be pretty sure to be the same as ours—Morlaix, Quimper, Auray."

"We must hope to be either a few days before or a few days behind him at each place. There is no use in anticipating evils." A rather demurring silence. "Our great difficulty," I continue, cheerfully, "will be to avoid him as long as he remains here; but we must find out from Frederic every day in which direction he means to walk or drive, and take care to walk or drive in the opposite one."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," cries Lenore, quickly. "You may please yourself. One's life would not be worth having if it were spent in dodging a person about a tiny place like this. As to meeting or not meeting, we must trust to chance; and, for my part, I should rather enjoy it than otherwise."

"In that case," reply I sarcastically, "I would call again at the Hôtel de la Poste. Next time I would go as a garçon ; it would be still more spirited."

"He could not have looked more scandalised than he did even if I had," replies Lenore, bursting into a short vexed laugh. "After all"—brightening up a little—"when I think of the things I might have done, and did not, the enormity of the thing I did dwindles surprisingly." I shake my head dissentingly. "I only wish I could have the chance of letting him know how direly disappointed I was in him," says Lenore viciously. "I wonder shall I ever?"

"I sincerely hope not."

"If I do you may be sure I will not lose it," she says, with an angry emphasis. "I know nothing that would give me such pure, such lively pleasure."

This is on the day following Lenore's



escapade. In the evening old Mademoiselle L  roux gives a little party, according to her lights. When we enter the *salon*, about half-past seven, we find most of the company already assembled. The piano is open (it is generally locked), and Mademoiselle P  roline, with her hair newly frizzed, and her muslin flounces mightily gauffered, is executing a surprising phantasia, wherein the air loses itself perpetually in variations that seem to have nothing to say to it, and reappears anon, when least expected, like a train out of the Box Tunnel. Mademoiselle L  roux, in a fresh burst of yellow ribbons, is in the act of shutting the one open window. A youth with an unearthlily deep voice, in bright purple kid gloves and a vivid green tie, is turning over the leaves for P  roline. Round the table are sitting five young girls, sisters—English, certainly; insolvent, probably. They are of the usual type of British

dowdy—red cheeks, hearty laughs, big flat waists. Among them—Jack among the maids—sits M. César; his eye-glass is in his eye, and a piece of tapestry-work in his hand; an English couple, and a French gentleman in drab thread gloves, whose name never transpires, complete the gathering. Lenore, whom I have had great difficulty in inducing to appear at all—Lenore, who, if she is in a company not congenial to her, or if she has nothing to say, maintains that absolute silence which is unluckily tabooed in society—throws herself, after the first salutations and presentations have been gone through, into a corner of the sofa, and keeps her head bent dumbly over her work. I draw a chair next to M. César and the moderator lamp, and ask him halting and ungrammatical French questions about his Berlin-wools. The fantasia comes to an end.

"Are you fond of music, M. César?" I

ask, having exhausted the subject of the wools.

“Yes, mademoiselle ; I love it passionately.”

“Do you play or sing yourself ?”

“No, mademoiselle ; I draw.”

“César sketches from the nature,” says his mother, coming up, laying her fat white hands on her son’s shoulders, and smiling in her plump *débonnair* widowhood over his head. “My child, show to Mdle. Erreech that pretty little drawing that thou madest yesterday when thou wentest on horseback with thy uncle to Corseul.”

“But, mamma, it is but a bagatelle !” replies César with proud humility. His modesty being overcome, the sketch-book is produced.

“Is it not of a surprising resemblance ?” asks his parent, proudly smiling, and leaning forward in order to feast her eyes.

“Monsieur has not yet perhaps quite



finished it," I say, hardly able to contain my laughter, as I examine, with admiring gravity, the woolly trees, little niggling black shades, and houses utterly out of the perpendicular. M. César's mode of treating foliage is singularly *wormy*. Then, seeing that I have not said what was expected of me, I added: "A thousand thanks, monsieur! It is indeed a charming talent!"

"But it is nothing!" rejoins César, with a bow and a deprecatory wave of the hand.

At this moment Stéphanie enters, bearing a tray, and thereon weak tea and sponge-cakes, supposed to be *à l'Anglaise*. As she hands these delicacies to me she stoops over me, and says, in a confidential half-whisper:

"There are two messieurs downstairs, come to make a visit to mademoiselle."

"Two messieurs!" cry I, surprised;

while the five Misses Brown prick the attentive ear—rarer than green peas in January are resident men at Dinan—“and who are they, Stéphanie?”

“One, mademoiselle, is the little gentleman who comes nearly every day—the little *ministre Anglais* with the spectacles—and the other, never, mademoiselle, have I seen him before; he is a tall, a very tall, gentleman, with a great red beard.”

I look involuntarily across at my sister; her head is raised, her work is dropped—she is listening.

“Very well,” I say, with a sigh of impatience; “if Mademoiselle Leroux will have the goodness to permit it, ask them to walk up here.”

As I speak I lay down the chip I am plaiting on the table, and cross over to Lenore.

“Stéphanie tells me——” I begin.

"I know," she answers briefly—"I heard."

"And don't you think," continue I, with doubtful suggestion, "that it would be better for you to be out of the way while they are here? They cannot stay long, and it can hardly be pleasant for you to meet that man."

"It is neither pleasant nor unpleasant," she answers, doggedly. "I shall not stir; not for the world would I give him the satisfaction of thinking that I was ashamed to face him."

In two minutes more they have entered—Frederic first, shyly smiling, small and priestly; and behind him a large, grave, and unpriestly stranger. When first the brightness of the lit room smites his eyes, when first the smell of hot tea and cakes assails his nose, when first the clack of the many women's tongues—French and English—attacks his ears, he shows an involun-



tary inclination to turn and flee, but, overcoming the temptation, advances, with the air of a martyr, to where we are sitting. Glad of the opportunity of gratifying my curiosity afforded by Frederic's tremulous and deprecatory presentation, I look up at him. So this is Le Mesurier! Surely, surely, I should never have known him from my sister's angry description. His eyes are not large certainly, but I have very frequently seen smaller. His nose, on the contrary, is certainly not small, but I have very often seen larger. As for the villainous expression she mentioned, if it is anywhere it must be about his mouth, which is lying perdu under great plenty of tawny hair. He looks at me with the cursory superficial glance with which men always regard me; looks at me because I am standing opposite to him—because he has just been introduced to me—not in the least because he thinks me worth looking

at, which indeed I am not. Lenore bows also, and, but for her utter unsmilingness and her extreme redness, there would be nothing differing in this from any ordinary introduction.

"In what country is it the mode to pay morning calls by moonlight?" I hear her brusquely ask in a low voice of Mr. West, who has seated himself on the sofa beside her.

"Indeed, Miss Lenore" (leaning his two hands on the top of his green umbrella, and beaming wistfully at her through the blue haze of his spectacles), "we did not mean to have come in at all. I sent up a message to ask whether your sister would be good enough to come down and speak to me for a minute; but you know I am not a great adept in French, and I suppose the maid must have mistaken my meaning."

"You might easily have corrected the



blunder without coming up," retorts my sister, ungraciously.

"Do you think so?" asks Frederic, humbly. "Perhaps ; but indeed it would have been difficult, you see ; old Made-moiselle Leroux overheard something of it, and she came down herself—and—I am sure she meant it most hospitably—but she, I may say, almost *drove* us up before her."

"And *he !*" (glancing irefully in Mr. Le Mesurier's direction, who, in bitter misery, and looking unspeakably cross, is trying to make Madame Lange understand that he does not comprehend one word of what she is saying to him). "And *he !* what brings *him* here ? It is execrable taste, and I have a good mind to tell him so."

"Pray, *pray* don't!" cries Frederic, eagerly ; "if anybody were to blame, it was I. I asked him whether he would

mind walking with me as far as the Porte St. Louis, and he said 'Oh, no, not in the least.' He wanted to have a cigar, and it was the same to him to walk in this direction as in any other ; all he stipulated for was *that he should not have to go in.*" Lenore is still working ; she gives her thread a vicious tug, which snaps it. "Indeed, Miss Lenore, he had no more thought of seeking your acquaintance than you of seeking his."

This mode of expression is unlucky, as he feels as soon as it is out of his mouth ; but Lenore, fortunately, does not seem to perceive it.

"He had no intention, then, of paying us the honour of a visit?" cries Lenore, looking not much appeased by the information, but, on the contrary, rather more exasperated than before.

"Not the least," replies Frederic, earnestly ; "you may reassure yourself on

that head—nothing was further from his thoughts.”

“ He has, then, a *second* time been forced into our company against his will,” retorts the girl, with angry eyes.

“ He is not fond of society,” replies Frederic, evasively ; “ he says himself that he is totally unfit for it.”

“ There, at least, I have the happiness entirely to agree with him,” cries she, drily.

Mr. Le Mesurier has at length succeeded in making Madame Lange understand that hers are to him dark sayings.

“ Monsieur does not comprehend ? A thousand pardons ; it is unfortunate, but I talk not the English. Péroline, my friend, thou hast learned the English when thou wast at school ; come hither and talk to Monsieur.”

But Péroline shakes all her *crépéd* head.

"But no, mamma ; Monsieur would but laugh at me !"

"Have you given your message, West ?" asks Le Mesurier, abruptly, joining his friend, and looking nearly as much goaded to madness by the women's shrill clatter as a mad bull by red cloth—"because, if so, I should say we had better not intrude on these ladies any longer."

Thus reminded, Frederic comes over to impart his errand to me ; and Le Mesurier, having parried by dumb show all old Mademoiselle Leroux's offers of chair, sponge-cakes, *eau sucré*, remains standing silently by Lenore.

"What is this message ?" she presently asks, abruptly, not raising her eyes from her work, and seeming to address her question rather to the air than to her neighbour.

"Something about a boat, I believe," replies he formally, his careless glance

wandering away from her to West, and his foot beginning to tap an impatient tattoo on the floor.

“What about it?” still more brusquely.

“Some fellow here of the name of Panache, or something like that, has lent him one, and he invites you and your sister to have a row up the river to Lehon in it to-morrow.”

“Oh! I should have thought that errand might have kept till the morning?”

“So should I,” he answers drily; “so I told him.”

A little silence.

“Does he want you to go, too?” she asks, moved by some sudden impulse, lifting her eyes and looking at him, hardily yet shamefacedly.

“Me!” (with surprise)—“not that I am aware of.”

“Oh!” dropping her eyes again.

“Why do you ask?”

"I had no particular motive" (nonchalantly). "I never have a motive for any of my actions."

"Take a tea-kettle ; light our own fire—there must be plenty of sticks in those great chestnut-woods—have tea. What do you say, Lenore ?" cry I, anxious to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* that must be so distressing to my sister.

"Charming!" answers Lenore, ironically. "A fire that one lights one's self never lights ; the kettle invariably topples over, and the water of the Rance tastes of old iron. But what are such trifling drawbacks ? Let us go, by all means!"





CHAPTER V.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.



STEEP path, and steps cut on the hill's rough face, from the blinding white highroad to the water's edge. A beautiful brown river washing the feet of the granite height, on which Dinan sits like a queen ; Dinan's walls, and towers, and spires looking down upon its lovely Rance : the Rance, that a little lower down will go stealing under the worn stone arches of the old bridge, and a little higher up came flowing beneath the great viaduct, that, with its ten giant arches, strides across the valley. At the landing-

place, a little narrow four-oar, with a sharp nose, is lying, and around it four people talking.

"Of course, if you wish it, Lenore, we must go," I say, resigned but gloomy, as I stand beneath a huge buff sunshade, which casts a becoming yellow light on my interesting face, clad in a dust-coloured gown, and girt about the waist with a leathern bag—the impersonation of travelling Englishwomen. "But if we *all* get in, we shall inevitably swamp it."

"It is only intended for three *really*—two to row and one to steer," says Frederic, setting down a very large basket, under which he has been staggering along all the way from Mdlle. Leroux's. "But I thought that, perhaps, if Miss Jemima did not mind, one of us—the one that is lightest—Miss Jemima, for instance, might sit at the bottom of the boat, on shawls and cloaks. and so forth, in the bows."

“It reminds one rather of Raphael’s cartoon of ‘The Miraculous Draught of Fishes,’ does not it?” says Le Mesurier (for he is the fourth person), laughing as he jumps into the little skiff, and deposits in it an immense stone jug of claret-cup. “The proportion in size between the Apostles and their boat is something like the present case. Miss Herrick, if you are to sit in the bows, I’m afraid it will have to be upon the claret-cup.”

“Frederic!” cries Lenore, from the lowest step, on which she is sitting, lifting up calmly commanding eyes and a little round cleft chin towards him; “suppose you solve the difficulty! Suppose *you* walk; it is charming along the towing-path; no wind, no flies, no nothing!”

“Of course, if you wish, Miss Lenore,” looking rather blank, and still panting from the effects of his wrestle with the basket, “but——”

"You can add some more butterflies to your collection," continues my sister in a wheedling voice. "I daresay you have got your green gauze scissors in your pocket.—Do you know" (bringing the whole battery of her dimples to bear upon Mr. Le Mesurier), "he catches butterflies with a pair of green gauze scissors, and sticks pins in their poor fat bodies ; how he reconciles it to his conscience and his bishop I don't know, but I suppose, like fishing, it is a form of cruelty purely clerical."

"It is rather hard to turn poor West out of his own boat, isn't it ?" replies Le Mesurier, looking down on my sister more collectedly than men are in the habit of looking ; nor, indeed, am I able to detect one grain of admiration or approbation in his cold blue eyes. He looks at her much as he looked at me. "I say, West, you weigh, I regret to say, at least five stone

less than I do ; *you* take my place. *I really and truly don't care a straw about it.*"

This last sentence, emphatically spoken, is intended for an aside, but I, who have a happy knack of overhearing things, that I am not meant to overhear, catch it. Frederic's piece of information about his friend, "the society of respectable women always bores him—he makes no secret of it," recurs to my mind. He is doing his best to shirk two eminently respectable women at the present moment.

"Lenore!" cry I—reddening, as I feel, under my yellow umbrella—"let us row ourselves; we have, at all events, got the mainstay of the entertainment—the tea-kettle and the claret-cup."

But Lenore frowns and turns away.

"Perhaps, after all, I had better walk," says Frederic, uncertainly, glancing with uneasiness towards my sister's averted

head. Perhaps, after all, it is the best arrangement."

"Just as you please, of course," replies Le Mesurier, looking rather disappointed, while a little smile of contempt plays about his mouth and the half-inch of tanned cheek that his beard leaves visible. Lenore rises.

"As soon as this amiable contention as to who should show most alacrity in trying to avoid us is ended, perhaps some one will help me in," she says rather sharply, and with a certain elevation in air of nose and chin. Le Mesurier gives her his hand : he does not rush forward to do so, as most men would in her case : does not tumble over his own legs in his precipitancy, like poor Frederic : only he is standing nearest her, and therefore he gives it her.

"Put your foot exactly in the middle ; walk steadily ; go to the stern ; you had better steer !" he says, shortly and rather austere.

Half an hour afterwards, Frederic and his green umbrella are tramping disconsolately along the towing-path, and we are being sculled up-stream by an unwilling gentleman, upon whom we have forced ourselves, and who is longing to be rid of us. The sun pours down in broad golden rain upon the blinding bright river. Through the viaduct's great arches, towering up against the June sky, we see Heaven's sapphire eyes looking. The air is astir with the winged families that live only a day, but whose one day is all joy. The sombre chestnut woods, that darkly clothe the steep slopes, run down to the river's side, as if hastening to drink ; white-capped women are kneeling by the edge, washing linen, and beating it viciously on stones with wooden shovels ; no wonder that there are jagged holes in one's cotton gowns when they come home from the laundress. Long blue dragonflies sail slow and kingly

among the flags and flowering rushes that grow along the river—that grow again, the same, only wrong way up, in the vivid clear reflections. We are each of us rather silent, partly because we are hot, partly because we are none of us in a very good temper. Lenore leans over the side, and drags her bare right hand through the water, making our little cockleshell lurch unpleasantly.

"You had better sit straight, Miss Herick; it takes very little to destroy the equilibrium of this sort of boat," says Mr. Le Mesurier, rather drily. Lenore does not appear to hear; she only leans a little further over, and admires her own slim fingers, that look unnaturally, lucidly white seen through the watery veil.

"For Heaven's sake, sit straight!" cries he a second time, but much more energetically, as the gunwale of the boat comes almost on a level with the water. Lenore draws herself slowly up.

"Were you speaking to me?" she asks, with provoking coolness; "how could I tell? You said, 'Sit straight, Miss Herrick.' I am not Miss Herrick!"

"Miss Lenore, then. I will call you what you please, only for Heaven's sake sit still."

"I wonder you ever go in a boat if you are so nervous," says my sister tartly.

"I am not *nervous*, as you call it, when I am with people who behave rationally," replies he coldly; "but I know that a mere touch will upset a boat of this kind, and I also know that if it did upset, one of you two would infallibly drown, for I could not possibly save you both."

"*One* of us? *Which* of us?" cries my sister, and I see a mischievous devil come into her eyes as she begins to laugh, and to rock violently from side to side; "I *must* see which."

"Lenore! Lenore!" cry I in an agony,

clutching the sides of the boat, "stop, for Heaven's sake! I beg, I implore. Lenore! Lenore!"

But all in vain. Lenore only laughs and rocks the more. Mr. Le Mesurier says nothing, nor can I see the expression of his face, as I am sitting behind him; he only turns the boat's head towards shore, and half a dozen vigorous strokes of the oar brings us swish through a great company of stiff bulrushes to land. Mr. Le Mesurier jumps out.

"Miss Herrick," he says gravely, "I shall be delighted to row you home this evening; but as I cannot answer for your life for five minutes, as long as your sister is in the boat, I should be very much obliged if you would get out now."

"Perhaps I was foolish," reply I, grasping my umbrella, and scrambling out on the oxeyed bank, "but I have such a horror of drowning!"



CHAPTER VI.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

“**N**OW, Miss Lenore, I am quite at your service,” says Le Mesurier, resuming his seat, taking the oars again, and pushing out into mid-stream. Lenore hangs her head, and dries her fingers with her pocket-handkerchief, but does not answer. “It was no doubt very spirited of you, trying to upset the boat because your sister asked you not,” continues he sarcastically; “but as she did not seem to see it in the same light, I thought that the kindest thing I could do was to land her.”

"Jemima is a coward," replies Lenore, pouting; "the only kind of boat she likes is a great broad-bottomed tub, that one might play leap-frog in without upsetting."

"I should think it would be the pleasantest kind of craft to go out boating with you in," rejoins he with rather a grim smile; "but now, as I said before, I am quite at your service; upset me as soon as ever the spirit moves you."

"You give me *carte blanche*?"

"*Carte blanche*!"

"But if I *did* upset the boat," says Lenore, half laughing, half vexed—"I don't say that I *am* going—but if I *did*, your first care ought to be to pull me out."

"Ought it?"

"*Oughtn't* it?"

"I don't know what it ought to be," replies Paul, pulling leisurely along through the shining flood; "I know what it *would* be."

“What?”

“To pull myself out.”

“You are like a man I heard of, who said one day to another man out hunting, ‘Don’t look behind, there are two women in the ditch; and if you look, you’ll have to stop and pick them out.’”

“*I* was the man.”

Lenore laughs. “You would let me drown then?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“Well, you are the only man in the world who could sit there and tell me so to my face,” cries the girl, angry scintillations flashing from her superb eyes, and the ever-ready colour rushing headlong to her cheeks.

“If you were to upset the boat,” replies Paul, calmly, looking with intense disapprobation at his beautiful companion, “I should know that it was your deliberate intention to commit suicide, and I hope I

have better manners than to run counter to any lady's plainly-expressed wishes."

"I have a great mind to try," answers Lenore, looking down into the clear brown depths, where her own image lies, tremulous and shimmering, and then into Le Mesurier's impassive face.

"Do, by all means ; only let me pull you a hundred yards further on. It is five or six feet deeper under those poplars."

"After all, I think I won't," says Lenore, naïvely, her anger subsiding, as soon as she sees that it neither alarms nor awes, nor even very much amuses him. "I don't know how it is with other people, but with me, the mere fact of being given leave to do a thing, takes away all desire to do it."

"From the little I know of your character, I should imagine that you did not often wait to be given leave."

"Not very often," replies the girl, gravely, looking away beyond him, to



where, on the Rance's right bank, Lehon Abbey lifts its roofless walls and grey arches to the sky. "Once, long ago, when I was little, I was very, *very* ill—I'm not over-strong now, though you would not think it to look at me—and the doctor said I was to have whatever I asked for, for fear of bringing on a fit of coughing if I screamed; and the consequence was that if ever I wanted anything I always threatened to break a blood-vessel, and straight-way got it."

"I should think that that threat had lost its efficacy now," says Paul, looking incredulously at the girl's full womanly figure, and at the plump though slender dimpled hand, that droops over the boat side—at the round cream-white column of her proud throat.

"No, it has not," she answers, shaking her head; "the prestige of my delicacy still remains, though the *fact* no longer

exists, and I of course am careful to keep up a tradition which tends so much to my own interest, as it enables me to have my own way in everything."

"What a very bad thing for you !" says Le Mesurier, brusquely. "If I were your sister, I should set up a rival blood-vessel."

"It would be no use," answers Lenore, laughing, and swinging her broad straw hat to and fro. "Jemima is one of those hopelessly healthy people who will live on, without an ache or a pain, to a hundred, and then tumble downstairs or get run over by an omnibus, natural means having proved utterly inadequate to kill her."

They are slowly sliding past Lehon, past the ivied bridge, past the steps down to the waters, wherein the Lehon monks used to bathe their holy sleek bodies in the by-gone summers, in the quick stream : pious Sybarites, who reconciled God and Mammon as never anyone has done since then.

“It would have been very different if papa had lived,” continues Lenore, beginning to dabble again, unremonstrated with this time. “He used to make us get up at five o’clock on winter mornings to go out walking by starlight with him ; used to make us stand in a row before him, with our hands behind our backs, to repeat the Catechism ; and if we stumbled in our ‘Duty to our Neighbour,’ or ‘I desire’—Jemima always stuck fast in ‘I desire’—made us hold out our hands to be caned.”

“What a thousand pities that he died !” says Paul, almost involuntarily resting on his oars, and staring straight from under his tilted hat at his *vis-à-vis*’ face, his keen eyes undazzled by all the pretty tints and harmonious hues that feast them.

“Do you think so ?” cries Lenore, looking up from the contemplation of her own face in the water. “Now, on the contrary, I think it was such a mercy that he did ; I

never feel tempted to question the wisdom of Providence's decrees in that particular instance."

"What a truly filial sentiment!"

"Don't look so shocked," answers the girl, beginning to laugh again. "I was but five years old when he died, and the only very clearly-defined association that I have with him is the biting his hand one day, and being shut up in the black-hole because I would not say I was sorry. I *was* not sorry; I *never* was sorry; I am not sorry now."

"All the same, I still regret that he died."

"Why?"

"Every woman needs some one to keep her in order," replies he, gravely, as if giving utterance to a sentence against which there can be no appeal. "Until she has got a husband—her natural and legitimate master—she ought to have a father."

“Natural and legitimate master!” repeats Lenore, scornfully, drawing up her long throat. “Did I hear aright? That *would* be the subjection of mind to matter, instead of matter to mind.”

“I can’t say that I agree with you” (very drily).

“There is not that man living that could keep me in order; I would break his heart, and his spirit, and everything breakable about him, first.”

“I have no doubt that you would try.”

“I should succeed. I have got papa’s temper; they all tell me so—Jemima—my other sister—everybody” (speaking very triumphantly).

“You say it as if it were matter for pride. It is astonishing what things people pride themselves on. I believe there was once a family which piqued itself on having two thumbs on each of its hands.”

“I *should* pity the poor man who under

took to keep me in order," says Lenore, folding her hands in her lap, while delicious ripples of laughter play about her lips and cheeks at the thought of the sufferings that await her future owner.

"Of course, you never mean to marry?"

"Of course, I do, though" (getting rather angry, and colouring faintly). "Do you think I mean to be an old maid?"

"I think," replies Paul, bluntly, "that, considering the utter docility which with you would be a *sine qua non* in a husband, you run a very good chance of being one."

Silence for a few moments; no sound but the "swish" of the oars—the cool wash of the water against the keel; then Lenore, resolute, woman-like, to have the last word, recommences.

"Confess," she says, leaning forwards towards him a little, and emphasising her remarks with her forefinger; "confess that there is not a more laughable, degrading

sight on the face of the earth than a woman in a state of abject subjection to her husband !”

“ Confess,” replies Paul, leaning forwards a little also, and also speaking with emphasis, “ that there is not a more contemptible, degrading sight on the face of the earth than a man in a state of abject submission to his wife !”

“ You may laugh,” cries Lenore, loftily, carrying her head very high, and looking defiantly at him ; “ but I maintain that there is not a more contemptible creature in creation than a patient grizzel !”

“ And I maintain,” retorts Paul, looking back with equal defiance, “ that there is not a more pitiable reptile in creation than a hen-pecked husband, if such a being ever existed, which I have some difficulty in bringing myself to believe.”

They have both raised their voices a little in their eagerness. Three English-

women riding by on donkeys, their draperies extending from head to tail over those ill-used animals, turn their heads. M. Dunois, the banker's son, taking his afternoon canter on a big bay horse along the towing-path, turns his also.

"The aborigines are astonished at our vehemence," says Paul, recollecting himself; "and really," with a careless laugh, "as we neither of us have at present a victim to test our theories and wreak our cruelties upon, we need not excite ourselves over it, need we?" Lenore's sole answer is a vivid blush, of whose birth she herself could give no account.

"What on earth has come to the girl?" Le Mesurier says to himself, staring at her with the open unconscious stare of utter surprise; "alternately making very silly remarks, and getting as red as a turkey-cock over them. I wonder does she smoke? As likely as not. Shall I ask



her ? At all events, I wish she would let me."

"How long are you going to stay at Dinan ?" inquires Miss Lenore, presently, with an abrupt change of subject.

Paul shrugs his shoulders.

"God knows !"

"What an unnecessarily forcible expression !"

"Do you think so ? It is what the shop-keepers in one part of Spain answer if you ask them whether they have such-and-such wares in their shop ; they are too lazy to look, so they say, ' God knows ! ' "

"Long, do you think ?" pursues the girl, perseveringly, not heeding his apocryphal little anecdote.

"Until *my* friend gets tired of *his* friend M. de Roubillon's *château*, with all its absurd little turrets and weathercocks, I suppose," replies Paul, being not entirely

free from an old-fashioned insular contempt for everything Gallic.

"What is your friend's name?"

"Scrope."

"What is he like?"

"Oh, I don't know;" looking vaguely round at the water—the chestnut trees—the flags, for inspiration. "I'm a very bad hand at describing; he is much like everybody else, I suppose."

"Like *you*, for instance," rather maliciously.

"Good heavens! no," breaking into a short laugh; "he *would* be flattered at the suggestion!"

"You mean that he is good-looking?"

"Oh! yes; he is all very well" (rather impatiently).

"And how soon do you imagine that he will be here?"

"Oh! in two or three days, I should hope."

"You should *hope*!"—with a little accent of pique—"you don't like Dinan, then?"

"It is all very well, for France," replies Paul, magnificently; "but it is rather like a penny bun—a little of it goes a long way."

Lenore bends down her small head, heavily laden with great twists and curious plaits of crisp brown hair, and ceases from her questionings. It is Le Mesurier's turn to catechise.

"Are you so very fond of Dinan, then, Miss Herrick?"

"We are fond of any place that is cheap," replies Lenore, shortly. "Any place where mutton is sevenpence a pound seems to us prettier and pleasanter than one where it is tenpence."

"Oh, really!" looking and feeling rather awkward, and not exactly knowing how to take this manifestation of unnecessary candour.

“ We are real Bohemians, Jemima and I,” pursues the girl, resting on her hand her small downy face—downy with the wonderful bloom of life’s beautiful red morning—a bloom as transient and unreplaceable as the faint grey dust on just-gathered grapes. “ We pay our debts, but otherwise we are quite Bohemians. We go and stay at places out of the proper season ; we drive all over London in omnibuses, and go down the Thames in penny steamboats, and do a hundred other uncivilised things. One summer we spent at Boulogne ; I liked that, Jemima hated it.”

“ I daresay.”

“ Oh ! that *établissement* !” cries Lenore, clasping her hands together in childish glee at the recollection, while her speech trickles off into pretty low laughter. “ What fun it was ! and how happy all the wicked people looked !—everybody walking about

with somebody that did not belong to them."

"No wonder you enjoyed yourself," replies Paul, sarcastically, rather disgusted; not, as I need hardly say, at the fact related, but at the narrator.

"Look at Jemima gesticulating from the bank," cries Lenore, happily ignorant of the emotion she has produced; nor, indeed, is the idea that any one can be disgusted with her very much prone to present itself to her mind. "How eloquent an umbrella can be when wielded by a cunning hand! What a great deal Jemima's is saying!"

"It is saying 'Land!' I imagine, isn't it? Let us land," replies Paul, with some alacrity, his thoughts turning more affectionately towards claret-cup than towards a prolonged *tête-à-tête* with Lenore.

"Let us land," echoes the girl, with the slightest possible unintentional sigh.



CHAPTER VII.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.

THE flags and the thick green rushes make way for the little boat ; on either side they part, and through them and over them she slides, smooth and slow, to shore.

“ What have you done with my cocka-too ? ” cries Lenore, putting one little high-heeled shoe on the prow and springing lightly to my side. “ Have you mislaid him on the way, or has a ‘ lily white duck come and gobbled him up ? ’ ”

“ Neither,” reply I, rather morose at

having been defrauded of my water-party, "he is up in the wood picking sticks; he has been gathering you a nosegay as big as a coachman's on a drawing-room day, as we came along."

"I wish I could break him of that habit," cries Lenore, petulantly; "it is a bore having to carry them, and a still greater bore having to say 'Thank you' for a great posy of dandelions and buttercups."

"Poor West!" says Le Mesurier, with a half contemptuous laugh; "he shall give them to me; *I* like dandelions."

"Oh, so do I," replies Lenore, quickly. "I'm wild about flowers; they are the only things that do not deceive us—as I once overheard a girl saying to her partner at a ball."

"We had better keep in sight of the boat," I say, with my usual excellent common-sense, "or the Dinan *gamins* will be sure to steal it."

"Have you been here long enough," asks Lenore, addressing Mr. Le Mesurier over the top of my head, "to discover how cordially these interesting natives hate us English? Even abandoned infants of three and four throw stones and ugly words at us, only luckily one does not understand Breton Billingsgate."

"We spend a good deal of money in making ourselves hated in every quarter of the globe; it is a little way we have," replies Le Mesurier, with languid interest, as he stalks along, a martyr to circumstances, with a great stone jug in one hand and a kettle in the other.

"It is *too* hard upon us poor out-at-elbows English—you must know we are all out-at-elbows here," continues Lenore—"wasting our substance in clothing these Bretons and giving them better food than their wretched *galette*, and then getting pelted for our pains."



"One always gets pelted, literally or metaphorically, when one tries to do one's neighbours good," replies Le Mesurier, misanthropically; "better leave it alone."

We have turned off from the towing-path, and into the chestnut wood. There is no undergrowth, nor do the trees stand so close together, but that there is pleasant space for walking shadily beneath them. A little way ahead of us we see a small grey smoke and little shoots of fire rising straight upwards through the windless air, and beside it, Frederic on his knees, with his cheeks puffed out, like a trumpet player or a wind-god's, blowing the flame.

"There's devotion for you!" cries Le Mesurier, laughing, and indicating Mr. West with his kettle. "Poor West! making himself into an improvised pair of bellows!"

"*Dame!* as they say here, how ugly he is," cries Lenore, bursting out laughing.

"What base ingratitude," says Le Mesurier, casting up his eyes theatrically to the chestnut boughs; "a man ruins his trousers kneeling on damp grass, puts himself into a ridiculous attitude, and runs the risk of getting congestion of the lungs for you, and all you say is—what was it? did I hear aright?—'Damn! how ugly he is.'"

"I said French *Dame*, not English," retorts Lenore, still laughing; "there is a very great difference in force between the two."

"*Dame* is about equivalent to our 'Lor,'" I say, sententiously, "and I should imagine nearly as vulgar."

"One can use it with a pleasant *arrière pensée* of swearing, you know," says my sister, "without the wickedness."

"I think that will do now," cries Frederic, looking up at us with bland triumph from his kneeling posture, his cheeks reddened with the exertion of inflating them, and his

eyes watering from the smoke ; “the sticks were rather green.”

“ You looked an impersonation of Zephyr, as we came along,” answers Lenore, banteringly ; “ didn’t he ? Didn’t we say so, Mr. Le Mesurier ? ”

“ We did, all of us ; there was not a dissentient voice,” replies Le Mesurier, inattentively, fighting with an immense yawn, and his eyes fixed upon the stone jug.

“ Will you run and fill the kettle ? Frederic must make a nice flat place for it to sit upon,” continues my sister ; “ you know ” (looking up at him with a sort of sleepy coquetry from under her eyes) “ that it was only on the condition that you were useful that we allowed you to come at all.”

It may be my imagination, but I cannot help fancying that our new acquaintance elevates his eyebrows almost imperceptibly at this speech.

“ I don’t think that Mr. Le Mesurier

would have broken his heart if we had not let him come," I say tartly, in irritated surprise at Lenore's want of perception. So speaking I kneel down, and with a chafed spirit begin to unpack the basket and cut bread-and-butter. Lenore flings herself down on the grass, and lying all along among the wood-flowers, watches with a malicious smile Frederic, who has begun again to blow his flagging fire. The three English ladies on donkeys pass along the towing-path ; they turn their blue-veiled heads towards our little encampment, and stare. The youth whose pleasing task it is to goad their jackasses into fitful and momentary gallops, stands stock still, with wide hungry eyes fastened on the bread and marmalade.

" Frederic has overblown himself," says Lenore, laughing, " he has blown all his fire away. Mima, dear, you must go and pick up some more sticks for him."



I am preparing to rise and obey with my usual tame docility, when Mr. Le Mesurier, who has just returned with his full dripping kettle from the Rance, interposes :

“Miss Lenore—your name is Lenore, not Lenora, is not it?—may I ask you one question?”

“So as it is not how old I am, or whether my chignon is all my own hair,” replies Lenore, with a sort of uneasy smartness.

“It is neither; I don’t want to know either,” he answers, gravely.

“What is it, then? Say on,” throwing her head back a little, to be able to get a good look at him.

“Why do not you go and pick up sticks yourself, instead of sending your elder sister?”

“Elder sister!” cry I, with a mirthless laugh. “Please don’t challenge respect for me on that head; I had rather be

treated with contumely for evermore, than revered for such a *triste* superiority."

"I do not go myself," replies Lenore, not listening to me, but still looking steadily up at him, "because I make it a rule never to do anything for myself that I can get any one else to do for me."

"Oh, indeed! Thanks," turning away.

"I set no manner of store by those little every-day virtues," continues Lenore, disdainfully thrusting out her red under-lip; "running on other people's errands, carrying their parcels, ordering dinner, sitting with your back to the horses—any one can do them; they are a great deal of trouble, and there is no credit to be got out of them."

"Anybody cannot sit with their backs to the horses, for it makes some people sick," replies Le Mesurier, laughing.

He has thrown himself forward, full length on the ground, in one of those care-

lessly graceful attitudes that the British gentleman affects; his hat is on the back of his head, and his feet are kicking about among the catchflies and ragged robins.

“ Now, if it were some *big* thing,” continues my sister, flushing, as she, having raised herself from the grass, leans her back against a chestnut trunk, “ I could do it—I know I could; that is, if I had the chance, and if there were plenty of people to look on.”

“ And cry ‘ Hooray !’ like the little boys on Guy Faux day. Would you ladies mind my smoking *one* cigar ?”

“ I could have driven in the cart to the Place de la Revolution, like Madame Roland,” continues Lenore, beginning to march up and down, with her head up, and her hands behind her back; “ standing up all the way, in a white gown, with little red carnations on it, and my long black

hair hanging down my back ; I could have smiled back at the yelling *sans culottes*——”

“ I’m afraid you could not get guillotined nowadays if you were to be shot for it,” returns he coolly, holding his cigar suspended between his fore and middle fingers ; “ it is next door to impossible to get hung.”

“ I could have stabbed Marat in his bath,” pursues Lenore, clenching her hand upon an imaginary knife. “ Yes, stabbed him as he sat there, unshorn, sick, with a dirty cloth about his head——”

“ I’m afraid if you stick Beales or Bradlaugh in their tubs, you will only get ten years for it, commuted to two, if you make love to the chaplain,” replies Le Mesurier, resolutely prosaic.

“ I could have——”

“ You could have hammered Sisera’s temples to the floor or sawn off poor tipsy Holofernes’ head,” interrupts Mr. Le

Mesurier, rather impatiently cutting short my sister's heroics. "I know what you are going to say ; perhaps you could ; for my part, of all the characters known in history or fiction, I dislike those two strong-minded females about the most."

"I know exactly the kind of woman you like," says Lenore, stopping suddenly in her tramp, tramp, and looking down with contemptuous pink face on her prostrate and sprawling adversary.

"I don't well see how you can," replies he, throwing away the end of his cigar, and burying one hand in his tawny beard. "You have never seen my womankind ; you have never seen me with any woman."

"I did not even know that you had any womankind," she answers, a little inquisitively.

He does not gratify her curiosity. "What is exactly the kind of woman I

like ?" he asks, raising his cold quick eyes to hers.

"Amelia in 'Vanity Fair,' " she answers promptly, with a pretty air of triumph.

"I knew you were going to say that," he says calmly.

"But it is true, is it not ?" inquires she eagerly.

"Not in the least ; you never made a worse hit in your life."

"She was dollishly pretty ; she cried on every possible occasion ; she allowed every body she came near to bully her ; she had not two ideas in her head. With all these qualifications, how could she fail to be charming ?" inquires my sister with withering sarcasm.

"I like her better than Jael," says Le Mesurier, doggedly.

"So do I," cry I, tired of keeping silence, and clattering the tea-cups.

"What is your opinion, West ?" asks

Le Mesurier, trying to extract the cork from the claret-jug with his fingers. "I say, is there a cork-screw anywhere about? Which is your *beau ideal* of feminine excellence — Heber the Kenite's amiable wife, or Amelia Osborne?"

"Frederic has no *beau ideal* of feminine excellence," answers Lenore for him, with an ironical smile; "he hardly knows a woman when he sees one; his bride is the Church. Let us come to tea; the steam is beginning to lift the kettle's hat off at last."

As I have before remarked, the dinner hour at Mdlle. Leroux's *pension* is six o'clock; so it is at the Hôtel de la Poste; indeed, the great event of the day happens throughout Dinan at the same hour. To avoid, therefore, losing our daily portion of ragged beef, raw artichokes, and tripe (as half-past five has already come chiming through the chestnut boughs from the town

clocks), we are compelled rather to hurry up the conclusion of our *al fresco* feast. We give the rest of our French roll-and-butter, and the remainder of our tea (which, thanks to the Rance and Frederic, has an agreeably mixed medicinal flavour of old iron, alluvial deposit, and smoke,) to the donkey-boy afore-mentioned, who, careless of his fair charges, and leaving them to the wild will of their asses, has been haunting us as a young vulture haunts a battle-field. We stand on the flowered bank, prepared to re-embark. The boat lies so still, so still on the windless tide, like a young child asleep in the sun ; near the other bank a man naked to the waist, and standing up to his middle in water, is pulling bundles of rotten ill-odorous flax out of the river.

“ I shall take an oar going home,” says Lenore, with decision. “ I can row.”

“ Please don’t,” cry I nervously ; “ you

know you always catch crabs, and the last time that we went out boating on the Seine, at Rouen, you caught such a big one that you tumbled backwards over the seat and all but upset us."

"The oars were too short," she answers, looking displeased at this allusion; "it might have happened to any one."

"One crab will be fatal to us to-day," says Le Mesurier laconically, as he stands holding the boat's head steady for us to get in.

"If people *will* make boats no wider than knife-blades or paper-cutters they cannot blame me if they upset," returns she carelessly, giving him her hand and preparing to step in. To my surprise—I might almost say *alarm*—by the very hand she gives him he detains her.

"Miss Lenore, if you get in will you promise to sit still?"

"I never promise," she answers lightly,

leaving her hand peaceably in his. “When I was a child I never would promise to be a good girl, because I knew I never should be.”

“If you will not promise you really must not get in.”

“*Must not !*” cries she, giving her head an angry toss. “Who says *must not* ? *Must not* is an ugly word.”

“Not so ugly as *must* in a woman’s mouth,” getting rather angry too. “May I ask whose boat this is ?” loftily.

“I think you said M. Panache was the name of the fellow ; but I am not a good hand at French surnames.”

“If it is M. Panache’s boat, what right or authority have you over it, may I ask ?”

“None whatever,” he answers quietly, “except possession, and that is nine points of the law.”

“Did he lend it to *you* ?”

"On the other hand, did he lend it to *you*?"

"Mr. Le Mesurier, I'm not joking."

"Miss Lenore, *I'm* not joking."

"What business can it be of yours?"

"I do not wish to see *your sister* drowned," with an invidiously perceptible accent on the two words.

"You do not care whether *I* drown or not?" snatching away her hand, and flashing annihilating looks at him. They do not seem to do him much harm.

"We discussed that question *fully* before," he answers, rather bored.

"*Please* promise, like a dear child," cry I, coaxingly, from the bows, where I am seated uneasily under my yellow umbrella.

"Be rational," says Le Mesurier, looking at her gravely, yet with a suspicion of laughter about the eyes. "I promised to row your sister home; is not it only natural and Christian that I should wish to spare

her the abject terror she suffered this afternoon?"

"I will not promise," says Lenore doggedly, and breathing hard. "I will not be dictated to by a stranger. I will walk home."

So saying, she turns sharply away, and begins to walk quickly down the glaring sun-baked towing path.

"Mr. Le Mesurier, Mr. Le Mesurier!" cry I, jumping up, and almost bringing on the catastrophe about which we have been squabbling; "let her have her own way. She has never been thwarted in her life; we have always let her have her own will from a child!"

"For fear that she would break a blood-vessel if she had not," replies he smiling. "She told me so as we came along. Miss Lenore," raising his voice a little, "Miss Lenore! we throw ourselves on your mercy."

“Come back, come back,” cry I excitedly, shaking my umbrella; “you will get a sunstroke!”

But Lenore is too indignant to answer.





CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

THE blandness born of after-dinnerhood is upon all Dinan; everybody is as *suave* as fed lions; a child might play with them. The moon. is holding her great yellow candle above the town, and ugly black night skulks away in corners. On the other side of the Place St. Louis, the old priest is sitting at the bottom of his garden, reading his breviary by moonlight. His white house's green shutters, that have been closed all day, to keep out the dust and

glare, are just opened to let in the evening cool. The mysterious family in the large yellow house, a little lower down, who always go out driving in a ramshackle old close carriage, with all the windows up, about sundown, are setting off on their nightly expedition. The immense shadows of their horses are running up the face of the Pension Leroux: the heads and ears reach to the *salon* windows. Madame Lange, César and Péroline are out. They have gone *faire de la musique chez M. le Capitaine O'Flannigan*—a broken-down Irishman, who tells the credulous natives that he has been in the Guards, and who, with his numerous progeny, lives in the graceful retirement of an *entresol* in the Rue de Saint Malo. The Herricks are therefore in undisputed possession of the *salon*. The piano belongs to Madame Lange, and she mostly locks it when she goes out. She has forgotten to do so

to-day, and Frederic is committing piracies upon it. Like most little men, with small puny voices, he is fond of ferociously war-like and rollicking Bacchanalian songs, on the same principle, I suppose, which often induces a Hercules or a Samson to express in music his wish to be a butterfly,

"In his love's bosom for to lie,"

or a daisy, or a swallow. Frederic has just been giving faint utterance to heathenish *berserk* sentiments, such as that to fight all day and drink all night are the only occupations really worthy a Christian gentleman's attention; and now, leaning forwards on the music-stool, and peering near-sightedly through his spectacles at the score, he is piping,

"Soho ! Soho ! said the bold Marco !"

Mr. Le Mesurier—he is here too, it is a few days after [the tea picnic—is leaning

out of the window, smiling to himself and whistling inaudible accompaniments to the singer. He is not gigantic enough to wish to be a butterfly, and too big to insist upon being a buccaneer. So he does not sing at all. Jemima is smiling, too, and beating time with head and foot, as she knits. Lenore is not in the room at all ; she is sitting on the front-door step, rather to the disgust of Stéphanie, whose favourite seat it is, where she sits and chatters rough guttural Breton to her neighbours, in a clean stiff-winged cap, when her hard day's work is done. Lenore is chatting to nobody : she is only staring at the moon.

“Does your sister sing?” asked Le Mesurier, turning away from the window.

“Yes ; rather well — *when she chooses*,” replies Jemima, rythmically, still nodding time.

“Would she sing now, if one asked her ?”

" Probably not, but I can but try. Lenore! Lenore!" (going to the window and looking down). " Come in out of the damp, child ; you'll catch your death of cold."

" Never did such a thing in my life, my dear."

" What are you doing ?"

" Only baying at the moon, as Made-moiselle Leroux's poodle did last night !"

" Come up here and sing."

" Could not think of superseding the present able performer."

" He has stopped," puts in Paul, leaning his arms on the sill, and craning his brown neck out. " He is exhausted. The bold Marco takes a great deal out of a fellow, does not he, West ?"

As he speaks he turns away again, laughing, and so laughing forgets the request, about which he had never been much in earnest. A quarter of an hour passes. Frederic is still singing ; the bil-

liard balls' gentle click from the café next door mixes with his voice.

"Lenore ! Lenore !" cries Jemima, rising, knitting in hand, and leaning a second time out of the wide casement—

"Onora ! Onora ! her mother is calling.

She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling,

Drop after drop from the sycamores, laden

With dew as with blossom, and calls home the
maiden.

Night cometh, Onora"—

says Le Mesurier, spouting.

"Onora, alias Miss Lenore, went down the *place* towards the *fossé* five minutes ago."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"In that demi-toilette gown?" (with a horrified accent).

"*Was* it a demi-toilette gown?" asks Paul, with the crass ignorance of mankind.

"I mean without any shawl, or wrap, or cloak of any kind ?"

"She went just as she was when she was sitting on the doorstep."

"Let me run and bring her back," cries West, eagerly, jumping up and snatching his hat, prepared to rush forth on his quest with devouter haste than ever Sir Galahad showed in the pursuit of the Holy Grail.

"Oh, you know she never pays the slightest attention to you," answers Jemima, a little impatiently, forgetting her politeness in agitation, "nor to me either, for the matter of that. Mr. Le Mesurier, I think she minds you more than most people, I don't know why ; would you mind trying to persuade her to come in out of the dew ?"

"Delighted !" says Le Mesurier, with a ready lie, walking towards the door ; "and if fair means fail, am I to employ foul ?"

Lenore is not in the *fossé*. The grey

towers of Duchesse Anne's castle rise beside it like a faint dark dream ; black as Erebus, quiet as death, the tree boughs spread above him ; beneath them, on a black and silver path, he walks along—walks along slowly, enjoying his cigarette, and in no particular hurry to overtake his Holy Grail. On and on to the Place Du Guesclin, and there, a long way from him, he sees the white glimmer of a woman's dress. He walks up to the glimmer : he has found his Holy Grail.

“Your sister sent me to ask you to come in out of the dew,” he says, rather stiffly, and delivering his message with the exactitude of a Homeric messenger. He has come up rather behind her ; she did not perceive his approach.

“Tell my sister to mind her own business,” she cries, startled and angry.

“I suppose she thinks that *you* are her own business,” he answers, coldly.

"At all events, I am not *yours*," she says, rudely, yet laughing. Without another word he turns to go.

"Let her catch her death of cold! No great loss if she does!" he says to himself, beginning to light a second cigarette. He has not gone three yards when he hears a step behind him. A charming face, with little waves of moonlight rippling over it, smiles up at him.

"Why are you going?" she asks, in a low voice, as if saying something she was half ashamed of.

"I am not a spaniel, nor a *Frederic West*."

"I was rude, I suppose" (hanging her head).

No answer.

"I often am, I fancy."

"*Very* often" (emphatically).

"It is my way."

"It is a very bad way."

"I do not think it is *quite* all my fault either," she says, almost humbly; "it is partly *theirs* — I mean Mima's and Frederic's, and my other sister's. When I was a child, if I said anything rude they only laughed, and thought it clever. I wish they had not, now."

"So do I."

"It makes people hate one a good deal," says the girl, naïvely. "This year we went to a ball that the 5th Dragoon Guards gave, and several of them did not ask me to dance *once*, because I had said things about them. I told one that he was like a pig set up on his hind legs; so he was, but he never came near me all the evening in consequence."

"Poor fellow!" says Le Mesurier, laughing. "You could hardly blame him."

"You are not angry now—you are laughing!" cries Lenore, joyously. "Tell me" — coming confidentially close to

him—"is the bold Marco still saying Soho ?"

"He was when I left."

"Do not let us go home, then ; let us sit on this bench and talk."

So they sit on a bench with a back to it, in the deep shade cast by a double row of young lime trees. The heavy sweet lime flowers sway above their heads, sway so low as almost to touch their lips and cheeks. The lights from the café and the Hôtel de la Poste opposite make little red reflections on their clothes and faces. Three Englishmen are coming back from fishing with rod and basket in their hands ; two very tall Englishmen and a very little one. At something that the little one says they all laugh uproariously. It seems a sin to speak above one's breath in this holy moonshine. Two Frenchmen and three women saunter by in the deep shade ; it takes a little effort to count how many

there are. Whether they are old or young, pretty or ugly, who but a bat can tell in this fragrant gloom ?

“What are you thinking of, Miss Lenore ?” asks Paul, presently, peering a little inquisitively into his companion’s face, as she gazes at the stars that are trembling like heavenly shining fruits between the dusk tree boughs.

“I am thinking,” she answers, a little dreamily, “of how the Rance is looking *now, at this minute*, down at Lehon, as it laps against those ivied steps where the monks used to bathe.”

“Shall I row you down there to see ?” he asks, banteringly. She springs to her feet in a moment.

“*Will* you ? Do you mean *really* ?” she cries, eagerly. “Ah, no !” (her voice falling with a disappointed cadence). “I see by your eyes that you did not mean it—that you were only tantalising me.”

He feels her thin draperies wafted against his knees in the slow night-wind, as she stands before him ; the breath of the lime flowers comes passing sweet to his nostrils. It is all but dark.

"I did not mean to tantalise you," he answers, simply. "I will take you, and welcome, if you wish ; only what will your sister say ?"

"She will say, 'Lenore, are you mad ?' She always says that. Perhaps I am mad ; I sometimes think so."

"But what time of night is it, do you suppose ? Is not it nearly bedtime ?" he asks, taking out his watch, and trying to decipher the hour by the little crimson gleams from the café.

"Bedtime !" she cries, impatiently. "I feel as if I shall like *never* to go to bed again as long as I live.

"What has night to do with sleep ?"

“All right, then—come along,” says he, recklessly, seeing that he is in for it, and that it is not his business to find his companion in prudish scruples, which do not seem inclined to occur to her. A quarter of an hour more, and no woman’s dress glimmers white from the shaded bench in the Place Du Guesclin ; it is glimmering, instead, in M. Panache’s little cock-boat on the broad bright Rance. Death’s lovely brother, Sleep, is ruling over everything ; even the river sleeps, and no passing breeze breaks its slumber. The moon comes up behind the chestnut woods, and the water lies smooth as glass ; while the trees, and the tremulous grasses, and the great squadrons of broad ox-eyes—yellow sun-disks with white rays round them—live again in the black depths, where the moon also lies drowned, like a pale bright maiden. They are floating along so stilly, so stilly, on the opaline flood. The little

boat hardly moves. Lenore is sitting in the stern. The red cloak Paul brought her is drooping from her shoulders; pearly lights are playing about her hair and her grave fair face and her wonderful eyes.

"If one were fond of her, one would be in the seventh heaven, I suppose," says Paul, cynically to himself. But even though one is *not* fond of her—even though one disapproves of her—even though she is not one's style—yet flesh is weak, and blood is blood; and in cool manhood, as in hot youth, blood still tingles, and pulses throb, with the seductive enervation of night, proximity, and great fairness.

"Shall I sing?" asks the girl, almost in a whisper—

"Sing! sing! what shall I sing?
The cat ran away with the pudding-bag string."

"By all means, if you like."

"What shall I sing, *really?*—English, French, German, Italian——"

"Whatever you please. The smallest contribution thankfully received."

She leans her round white elbow on her lap for a moment or two, and her head on her hand, in reflection; then the pensive look fades out of her face, and a dare-devil smile flashes over it.

"You are a civilian, are not you?" she asks, abruptly.

"I am *now*. Why?"

"You cannot take my song personally, that is all. Listen; I am beginning."

This is Lenore's song, as it rings gaily out over the dumb woods and waters. Most of you, my friends, know it well enough :

"Oh que j'aime les militaires !
J'aime les militaires ;

J'aime leur uniforme coquet,
Leur moustache et leur plumet.
Je sais ce que je voudrais.
Je voudrais être cantinière.
Avec eux toujours je serais,
Et je les griserais.
Près d'eux, vaillante et légère,
Aux combats je m'élancerais—— "

She breaks off abruptly.

" Do you like it ?"

" Immensely."

" That means, not at all."

" It is a song that I was always particularly fond of, and I think the line in which you express your intention of making your friends drunk peculiarly happy," he answers, ironically.

She looks down, half-ashamed.

" The ideal woman would not have sung such a song, I suppose ?"

" Probably not."

" Tell me," she cries, impulsively, " is the ideal woman clothed with flesh ?"

"What do you mean?"

"Is she some living, breathing woman, that you have in your mind's eye?"

He hesitates a little, and also reddens—unless the moon belies him—a very little.

"Since you ask me point-blank—well, she is."

The girl turns her fair head aside, and droops it over the stream, through which she draws her hand listlessly.

"Tell me what she is like; I wish to know," she says, presently, very softly.

Silence for a few minutes; then Paul begins:

"She is not at all clever—of the two, I think, she is rather dull. She does not say much, but she always thinks before she speaks."

"What an intolerable prig she must be!"

"She talks about things, not people. She is very loving——"

"Pooh!" interrupts Lenore, contemptuously. "What woman is not? It is our besetting sin. What a list of attractions! But tell me—tell me, is she handsome—as handsome as—as—as *I* am?" she ends, laughing confusedly, and growing scarlet.

The water falls drip, drip, in long lazy drops from the idle oars.

"*Are* you handsome?" he asks, gravely—not with impertinence, but as though wishing for information—and so asking, looks at her long and steadily in the moonlight—a familiarity of which she cannot complain, as she has brought it on herself. "Well, yes" (drawing his breath rather hard), "I suppose you are."

She laughs again, but constrainedly.

"But waiving the question of *my* beauty—is she handsome—pretty?"

"I do not know," he answered, slowly. "Some one asked me that question the

other day, and I said I did not know. I do not."

Lenore leans back in the stern with the rudder string in her hand.

"Describe her to me. I will tell you in a moment whether she is or not."

He stares absently over her head, at the viaduct, striding gigantic across the valley—at the town, with its house roofs white as silver sheets in the moonshine.

"She is small," he begins, slowly, "*very* small! not more than five foot one, and thin—rather *too* thin, perhaps," his eyes resting as he speaks, for an instant, with reluctant admiration on the superbly developed figure of his *vis-à-vis*. "Her eyes are——," he stops short in want of an epithet.

"Bright?" suggests Lenore.

"Bright! No!" cries he, energetically repelling her suggestion with scorn. "I hate your bright eyes. They always look

metallic; hers look at you as if they were looking through a mist, and they have a dark shady line under them."

"Belladonna!" suggests Lenore again, with supercilious brevity.

"Some one said to me the other day that they were like the eyes of a shot part-ridge," he continued, not heeding her; "so they are."

"What a lackadaisical dying duck sort of idea!"

"She is pale—as pale as—as—as—a lily!" he continues, unable to find a new white simile. "That clear yet opaque look——"

"Like a hard-boiled egg," interrupts Lenore, scornfully.

"Not in the least like a hard-boiled egg!" retorts he, nettled, and the river of his eloquence suddenly dried.

"I do not know whether you are aware of it," says the girl, with a heightened

colour, "but you have described a person in every respect the exact opposite of me."

He gives a half smile.

"Have I? I apologize. I really was not aware of it. I only did as you bid me."

He pulls a few yards further on; no sound but the oars turning in the rowlocks—the plash, plash, of the smitten water. Lehon Abbey lifts roofless gables to the nightly sky, and Lehon Castle its round dim towers, whence never a knight will look again. The water fairies have been supping on the river to-night; they have left their rare white water-lily cups and broad green platters behind them.

"Stop rowing," cries Lenore, imperiously, "I want to gather some of those lilies."

He obeys. Motionless they lie among the great round leaves, and white chalices. She leans back over the stern, and pulls

with her strong white hands at the tough long stalks.

"What will you do with them?" asks Le Mesurier, indolently, his unwilling eyes taking in the lazy grace of the half-recumbent form, of the large white outstretched arm, at which a happy moonbeam is catching; "they have not at all a nice smell in water—faint and sickly—they will only die."

No answer.

"What do you want with them?" he asks, rising, he does not know why, and stepping over the little seat that intervenes between them.

"You will see," she answers, briefly.

They are so wet—so wet, as they lie in her lap. He watches her as she dries one dripping bud with her pocket-handkerchief, and then with quick deft fingers places it closed and sleepy in her hair.

"Do you like it?" she asks in a half



whisper, raising her eyes to his, with a slow bright smile.

How still it is! Not a sound; everything is asleep; only the wakeful moon sees his cold quick eyes flash. He would have laughed this morning if you had told him that Lenore Herrick could make his heart beat as it is beating now.

"What would you have me say?" he answers, in the same key in which she spoke. "If I did not like it, would you have me tell you so?"

"Yes."

"I do like it," he says, half angrily; "you know I do; you knew I did before you asked me."

"Take it, then," she says with a low laugh, holding it out to him. "Keep it as a memento of the fast girl who *would* go out boating with you, against your will, at ten o'clock at night—of the girl who *may be very good fun, if one goes in*

for that sort of thing, but is not your style."

He reddens.

"What do you mean?"

"You will not have it? Well, then, here it goes!"

As she speaks she flings the blossom away, far out into the river. It falls with a little flop, and a little gleam of broken silver into the water, and so floats down to Dinan.

"What do you mean?" he cries, eagerly. "How impatient you are! I *did* want it; I held out my hand for it. I will have it yet!"

So saying, he snatches up one of the oars, and makes frantic lunges with it at the little valueless prize. It is exactly three inches too far off for him to reach. Paul's arms are long, and he hates being beaten. Unmindful of the tittuppy nature of little cock-boats, he leans farther and



farther over the side. It is *almost* within his reach—it is *quite* within his reach ; he has got it—has he, though ?

“ Take care ! take care ! ” cries Lenore, wildly ; but it is too late. In another moment, M. Panache’s boat is floating away, bottom upwards, after the water-lily, and two people are struggling and splashing in the moonlit Rance.





CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

WHEN Paul rises to the surface, sputtering and blowing unintentional bubbles, his first thought naturally is, "Where is Lenore?" At about three yards' distance from him he sees something white. He swims towards it, and catches at it; it is Lenore. Feeling his grasp, she flings out her two arms wildly, and clutches him spasmodically round the neck.

"Loose me!" he cries, breathlessly, still sputtering. "Lenore, I love you! you will drown us both!"

"What a ridiculous drowned rat you do look!" cries she, politely.

"The same to you," he answers, grimly, as he sits dripping dismally on the dry June grass.

"What have you done with your hat?"

"The same as you have done with yours, I fancy."

"And Mima's Connemara cloak?"

"Half way back to Connemara by now."

"I have lost one of my shoes," says the girl, half crying, "and the other is full of mud."

She looks up at him piteously, as innocently as a baby might do. The Rance has washed all the coquetry out of her eyes, on whose long lashes the river drops are hanging.

"How shall I ever get home? I shall have to hop all the way."

"Perhaps I might carry you," he says, not unkindly, leaning forwards to examine

and the chilly midnight waters. Having deposited her in a limp bundle on the bank, he sits down beside her and pants. As for her, she is a little stunned by the shock of the plunging water ; that is all. She is not wont to faint, and has not fainted now. Presently she sits up, and, pushing her dripping hair out of her bewildered eyes, says gaspingly :

"Don't scold me ; it was you that did it."

"I know it was," he answers, as distinctly as the chattering of his teeth will let him.

"Well, you did not let me drown after all, you see," she says, with a smile, that, though forlorn and drenched, is still half malicious.

"Well, no ; not this time."

They look at one another for a minute, then both burst into a simultaneous fit of violent laughter.

"What a ridiculous drowned rat you do look!" cries she, politely.

"The same to you," he answers, grimly, as he sits dripping dismally on the dry June grass.

"What have you done with your hat?"

"The same as you have done with yours, I fancy."

"And Mima's Connemara cloak?"

"Half way back to Connemara by now."

"I have lost one of my shoes," says the girl, half crying, "and the other is full of mud."

She looks up at him piteously, as innocently as a baby might do. The Rance has washed all the coquetry out of her eyes, on whose long lashes the river drops are hanging.

"How shall I ever get home? I shall have to hop all the way."

"Perhaps I might carry you," he says, not unkindly, leaning forwards to examine

the unlucky shoe ; while his nose and his beard and his short hair water the butter-cups and refresh them.

"Carry me !" she cries, derisively. "Why, I weigh nine stone eight ! I might as well talk of carrying you !"

He is not particularly anxious to carry her, and does not repeat his offer.

"How cold I am !" she says, shuddering. "How it runs down one's back, does not it ? I wish one's clothes would not stick to one like court-plaister. I am sure it will be the death of me."

"By-the-bye," cries he, a brilliant idea striking him, and beginning to search frantically in his coat-pockets (we, in Dinan, never dress for dinner, therefore he is still in his shooting-jacket), "if it is not gone—no, thank God ! here it is !"—drawing out a little silver flask—"take a pull at it, it will keep the life in you."

"What is it ?"

“Brandy.”

“Will it make me *drunk*?” she asks, gravely, holding it in her hand, and trembling all over like a smooth-haired terrier on a frosty day.

He laughs. “No such luck. It would be the best thing that could possibly happen to you, if it did; but it will not, I am afraid. Go on.”

She obeys, and drinks. It burns her throat, but her teeth become a shade less vocal. He follows her example; and then, jumping to his feet, gives himself a prodigious shake, like a Newfoundland who has just deposited the recovered stick at his master’s feet.

“Come on,” he says; “we had better be getting home as quick as we can. Let us pray that we may meet no one! I feel uncommonly small, do not you?”

“Uncommonly!” replies Lenore, with assenting emphasis.

"Give me your hand, and let me help you up."

She does as he bids her, and as she rises to her feet a fresh deluge rustles, drips, pours down from her.

"How heavy water is!" she says, staggering. "I have half the Rance about me. I feel like the woman who was killed by the weight of her jewels."

"Stay ; let me wring out your clothes a little for you."

He kneels before her on the grass, and with both hands twists and strains, and wrings her thin flabby gown and her soaked petticoats, as a laundress might.

"There, is that better ?"

"Yes, thanks. I think so—a little," replies she, doubtfully.

"Come on, then,"—employing the invariable phrase with which a Briton embarks upon any undertaking, from a walk with his sweetheart upwards to a Balaklava

charge. Without more speech they begin to tramp along the towing-path, leaving behind them a track as of a thunder shower or a leaky water-cart. On to the landing stage, up the steep steps to the highway. At the corner of the silent shining road a great rock abutting casts a sharp black shadow ; and out of this shadow, and into the light come two people, running in disorderly haste.

“ Your sister and West to the rescue,” says Le Mesurier, speaking for the first time since they set off homewards.

“ My long lost Frederic !” says Lenore, with grim merriment ; “ flying to the river-side to poke about for my dead body with drags and a boat-hook. How I wish we could avoid them ! How small and thin, and drowned I feel !”

“ Lenore, is that you ? where *have* you been ? how wet you are ! what *has* happened ?” cries Jemima, incoherently, scorn-

ing punctuation, and precipitating herself upon her sister.

"Jemima, my sin has found me out," replies Lenore, solemnly. "I *made* Mr. Le Mesurier take me out on the water ; and in order to pay off all old scores, he upset me."

"And himself into the bargain," says Le Mesurier, laughing.

"Jemima, your Connemara cloak is just about arriving at St. Malo ; so is my hat, so is Mr. Le Mesurier's."

"And you are not hurt, only drenched ?" cries West, tremulously ; and, forgetting his shyness, lays an audacious hand upon one of the shoulders that are glimmering, so wet and shining, through her transparent gown.

"Not hurt, only drenched," she echoes, laughing cheerily, and eluding him, while her face smiles out, pale and pretty and altered, from the thick frame of heavy

damp hair that cleaves so closely and lovingly to cheeks and throat. "See, Jemima!" exhibiting a small muddy foot, "my right shoe has gone the way of all shoes."

* * * * *

"A very blessed upset!" says Paul to himself, half an hour later, oracularly shaking his head, as he scrambles into dry clothes at the Hôtel de la Poste. "She was doing her best to make a fool of me, and she had all but succeeded."





CHAPTER X.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

A WEEK has gone by. Lenore's teeth no longer chatter. She is quite dry again, and has bought a new hat seven times more coquettish than the drowned one. She keeps, however, a tender memento of her adventure with Paul in the shape of a sore throat and trifling cough, which not even the unwonted dose of cognac has kept off. Breakfast at the Hôtel de la Poste is over. The twenty or thirty commercial travellers and clerks, who, according to the wont of French

hotels, share that feast with the visitors and tourists, have disappeared again into private life. Paul is sitting in the little dark *salon*, writing a letter to his sister, with a sputtering pen. Paul's caligraphy is rather like that of John Bell, of the Chancery Bar, who wrote three several hands : one that no one but himself could read, one that his clerk could read and he could not, and one that *nobody* could read. Paul is just staring hard at his production, and wondering what on earth was the mystic remark that he had made at the top of the second page—searching his mind for the history of the past week, in order to be able to give a guess as to what it was likely to have been, when the door opens, and admits Mr. West.

“ Le Mesurier !”

“ Well !” (not looking up).

West enters, and walks over to the window.

"Well!" says Paul, again, abandoning the idea of reading over his letter, and beginning to fold it.

West advances to the table, and lays a small tremulous hand on his friend's broad shoulder.

"Le Mesurier, I—I—have a favour to ask of you."

"My dear fellow, do not say that it is to lend you five pounds," cries Le Mesurier, in affected alarm. "I have had severe losses myself lately; I have a heavy engagement to meet to-morrow—"

"Oh, pooh! it is not that, of course; but—but—I have something to say to you."

"Say on."

"Not *here*" (glancing round uneasily); "we might be overheard."

"By whom? The noble army of shop-boys dispersed itself half an hour ago, and the landlord informed me yesterday that

the only English words he knew were, 'Sneep, snap, snorum, a cockolorum !' "

"Would you mind coming outside for a moment ?" says Frederic, pertinaciously.

"All right. Give us a light !"

He leisurely folds and directs his letter, and then takes out and lights a cigar, whilst West stands beside him, shifting feverishly from leg to leg, and rolling up his dumpling hat into a hundred weird shapes. . They emerge from the hotel door ; the *voiture* is just starting for Caulnes, drawn by a pony and a huge white horse, both in the worst possible spirits. A man, all clad in white flannel, is stepping into the interior ; a fat priest, with his limp cassock clinging about his legs, climbing up into the dusty *banquette* ; the blue-bloused driver mending a rift in the rotten rope harness ; and over all, the broad sun laughing down, and the lime flowers from the Place Du Guesclin shak-

ing out their lovely scent on the morning air. The two men cross the street, enter the *place*, and sit down on a bench—the very one on which Paul and Lenore sat in the dark, a week ago.

"Well!" says Le Mesurier expectantly, after they have sat three minutes without speaking.

"I am going home—to England," says Frederic abruptly.

"Have you brought me out here to tell me that?" asks Paul, banteringly.

Silence!

"So you are going home, are you, eh?" pursues Paul, carelessly. "So will I, I think. Let us toss who shall pay—heads or tails," throwing up a napoleon into the air and catching it.

But Frederic's thoughts are far enough away from heads or tails. The diligence is just moving off. "*Allez! Allez!*" cries the driver, flicking with his long whip the

old white horse's sharp back. The bells give a cracked jingle ; off they go !

" I am naturally particularly loth to leave this place just now," says West, his spectacles mournfully fixed on the lessening vehicle.

" Are you ?" says Le Mesurier, staring at him obtusely. " Why ? and why *naturally* ?"

Frederic pulls a delicate lime leaf that is fluttering just above his nose, and tears it into thin green strips.

" I thought," he says, blushing and stammering, " that you must have seen that there was—was something between me, and—and—and—Miss Lenore."

Paul shakes his head. " Indeed I cannot say that I ever noticed anything of the kind," he answers bluntly, feeling rather angry, he cannot imagine why.

" Did not you ?" (pushing his spectacles down on the bridge of his nose, and gazing

over them with meek surprise at his friend,) "I fancied that my attachment—my—my *devotion*—must have been patent to the most superficial observer."

"My dear fellow, of course they were," says Paul laughing, not ill-naturedly. "But you said something *between* you and Miss Lenore. Now the word *between* implies that there are *two* to the bargain."

"And you think that there is only one to this bargain," says Frederic despondently, looking down, while the blush fades out of his face, and the gay motes run up and down about his hair.

"Good Lord, West!" a little impatiently, "how can I tell? Does the girl confide in me, do you suppose?"

"No doubt you think," says Frederic, turning towards his companion again, while his sensitive mouth twitches painfully, "that I am not the sort of man to take a handsome spirited girl's fancy?"

“How can I tell?” repeats Le Mesurier, embarrassed by the exactitude with which his friend has hit his thought.

“ ‘Different men are of different opinions ;
Some like apples, some like inions—’

and I daresay women are the same.”

How drowsily the bees are humming high up among the faint thick blooms ! It is enough to send one to sleep.

“After all,” says Frederic, brightening a little, under the influence of his companion’s homely saw, “I am not altogether sure that the mere fact of her treating me cavalierly—chaffing me, calling me names, and so forth, tells entirely against me. It is the way of some girls, I believe. Even if Lenore *did* like a fellow, she would die sooner than shew it.”

“Would she ?” says Le Mesurier with a half absent smile, throwing his head back, and staring up into the flickering tremulous

leafage above him, while his thoughts travel back over the past week, to the silver wash of a midnight stream—to a lady with pearly lights playing about her, holding out a water lily to him, and saying with a slow soft smile, "Take it then." He is woke out of his trance by two Breton housewives, chattering past in those shrill screechy voices that God has given to Frenchwomen alone, as they step out stoutly in their short heavy petticoats and trim black stuff stockings.

"Now I have told you the state of things with me," says Frederic with a nervous laugh, "perhaps you can guess what is the favour I am going to ask of you?"

"I!" says Le Mesurier, giving a great start, and looking thoroughly puzzled.

"Guess."

"Not I. Perhaps," with a brilliant flash of intuition, "it is to ask me to be best

man : only that is no great favour, and it is rather premature, is not it ?”

Frederic jumps up suddenly.

“ If you are going to make a jest——” he says, with a hurt intonation.

“ My good fellow,” cries Paul, energetically, laying his hand upon his shoulder, “ I give you my word of honour that I know no more than the dead what you are driving at. I never *was* good at guessing. I never found out a riddle in all my life. I give it up.”

West looks at him distrustfully, but seeing no mirth, only boundless bewilderment, in his friend’s ugly face, he continues, speaking with difficulty, looking down and kicking about some stray cherrystones that a former occupant of the bench has left strewn on the ground :

“ I do not know why it is, I am sure—cannot make out—but you have certainly

more influence with Miss Lenore than any one else has."

"Have I?" says Paul shortly, turning away his head.

"She will do for you what she will not do for either her sister, or me."

"Will she?" still more shortly, while a slight flattered flush rises to his forehead.

"I really have not discovered it."

"And such being the case," continues West, with increasing hesitation, stammering, floundering, and reddening ever more and more, "I thought that perhaps you might——"

"I might *what*?" asks Paul, still staring stupidly at his friend.

"I thought," says West, plunging desperately *in medias res*, seeing that he is not likely to get much help from his companion's intelligence, "that you might perhaps—say something about me to her

—sound her feelings with regard to me, to a certain extent.”

“ I !!! ” says Paul, turning sharp round ; the mystified expression of his face giving place to one of enormous astonishment. “ I ! my dear West ? Are you *quite* cracked ? ”

“ She would at all events give you a hearing,” says Frederic, downcast but pertinacious.

“ Would she ? ” cries the other, laughing violently. “ I very much doubt it. She would be more likely to bang the door in my face and tear out my few remaining hairs, and quite right too.”

“ Perhaps it is because you saved her life,” pursues West ruefully, keeping on his own tack.

“ Saved her life ! ” breaks in Paul, now really angry. “ My good fellow, for God’s sake do not talk like a fool, whatever you do ! To upset a woman into a ditch and

then pull her out, can hardly be termed 'saving her life,' even in these days, when every little thing is called by some big name."

Silence ; the little yellow lights glancing and flashing up and down about their hats and coats.

"West," says Paul abruptly, rising from his seat, thrusting his hands down to the very bottom of his pockets, in his favourite attitude, and looking full and keenly into his companion's downcast face, "suppose you got Miss Lenore, what on earth would you do with her?"

"Do with her?" repeats West, staring. "What do you mean?"

"Can you fancy that girl a parson's wife?" says Le Mesurier, beginning to laugh, while with inner vision he sees again that dare-devil smile, those lovely half-lowered eyes, that had kindled such unwilling fire in his own cold veins. "Do

not be angry with me, West ; I could not stop laughing now if you were to kill me. I think I see her holding forth at a mothers' meeting, or teaching at a Sunday-school ! Poor little wretches ! would not she cuff them !"

"She is so young," says Frederic, deprecatingly. "I should hope that one might be able to *mould* her——"

"*Mould* her !" echoes Paul, derisively. "My dear boy, it would take you all your time. She would comb your hair with a three-legged stool."

A pause.

"I am to understand, then," says Frederic, trying to speak stiffly, but with a suspicion of tears in his voice, "that you decline to help me?"

"Decline to propose to Miss Lenore for you ? I do, distinctly," replies Paul, stoutly.

"Perhaps," says Frederic, with the easy

baseless jealousy of unlucky love, "you would have no such objection to speak to her on your own account?"

A dark unbecoming flush rushes over Le Mesurier's face.

"I!" he says, angrily. "What are you talking about, West? Must everybody be in love with her because *you* are? Did not I tell you, the very first day I saw her—the day that she took it into her head to play that unaccountable prank—very bad form it was too—that she was not my style? No more she is. I must say that she improves upon acquaintance; but, no, no—not my line at all."

Frederic sits down upon the bench again, in a stooped shapeless attitude of utter despondency.

"Why cannot you ask her yourself?" inquires Le Mesurier, with a mixed feeling of compassion for the sufferer's misery and raging contempt for his poverty of spirit.

"If a thing is worth having, it is surely worth asking for."

"It would be no use," replies West dejectedly; "she would not listen to me—she never does; she would only laugh, and turn everything I said into ridicule."

"Why on earth do not you go in for the old one instead?" asks Paul impatiently. "She would suit you down to the ground. *She* would listen to you fast enough, and *she* would not *need* any moulding."

"I dare say it would have been happier for me if I could have fancied her," replies West, with the admirable conceit of man, in whose vocabulary "ask" and "have" are supposed to be interchangeable terms. "She is a dear good girl, and really fond of parish work. But no no" (with a heavy sigh), "*that* is impossible now."

He covers his face with both hands, and relapses into silence. Paul eyes him doubtfully for a few minutes; then, laying

his hand on his shoulder, says, not unkindly :

"Cheer up, old man ! It is a long lane that has no turning. I would do anything *in reason* I could for you, for old acquaintance' sake ; but what you ask is *not* in reason—come, now, is it ?"

"Perhaps not " (in a stifled voice).

"She would box my ears, or order me out of the house, as likely as not ; she is quite capable of either," says Paul, trying to steel himself in his resolution in proportion as he finds it melting under the fire of his compassion.

"No doubt—I ought not to have asked you," West says, lifting his face from his hands, which fall nervelessly on his knees. "I should not have thought of doing so if I had not known what an opinion she had of you."

"Has she ?" says Paul, colouring again slightly, while a warm glow of self-satisfac-

tion steals pleasantly over him. "But now, my dear fellow, do think what a fool I should look. How should I begin? How should I go on? How should I finish?"

"I would leave all that to you, of course."

"No, no," says Le Mesurier, rising hastily; "*upon my soul, I cannot*; it is impossible. I have no opinion of go-betweens. Ask for yourself, and take your answer, whatever it is, like a man."





CHAPTER XI.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

BRAG, is a good dog, but Holdfast is a better. Mr. Le Mesurier, however, shows himself incapable of being the latter—incapable of keeping to the wise and rational resolution expressed at the close of the last chapter. On the morning of the day following that on which Frederic preferred his request, Paul might have been seen, walking slowly and with a hang-dog air, in the direction of the Pension Leroux. He is smoking like a chimney; his eyes are fixed on the

ground, and his hands are buried deeper than ever in the pockets of his old grey shooting-jacket.

“I would give any one twenty pounds to stand in my shoes for the next half-hour,” he says to himself as he drags his feet one after another through the calf market, between the miserable calves, flung down roughly, with legs tied together, and heads moving wistfully from side to side, to lie for hours together, baking helpless, and unpitied, in the midday sun. Paul need not have gone near the calf market at all; it is quite out of his way; but then it takes a little longer. He stands for a quarter of an hour staring in at the clever little terracotta models of men and beasts, in M. Noel Le Quillec’s small shop-window, close to the Porte Saint Louis; but however ingenious two clay pigs, set up on their hind-legs and walking arm-in-arm, or a donkey playing a concertina, may be,

it is impossible to stare at them for ever.

“ Please God she is out !” he says piously, turning with a sigh through the shady *porte*. But she is not out. As he comes in sight of the *salon*-window he sees two arms resting on the sill ; a woman in a bright blue gown and with bright brown hair leaning out. It is not Jemima. Jemima is not addicted to gay colours, save in the matter of that Connemara cloak, that Providence has sent sailing down the Rance to Saint Malo. The cherry market is held in the Place St. Louis. Groups of snowy-headed women with great eared caps are trudging about the little square, with huge baskets of piled-up cherries, shaded by great cotton umbrellas—little luscious black cherries, juicy red ones, pale fleshy whitehearts. Lenore is in treaty for some of the latter.

“ *Tenez !*” she cries, sending her clear

English voice, fresh as the voice of a waterfall or of a blackbird on a green April evening, down through the sing-song French screams below, and pointing with her fore-finger to a tempting heap—" *Com-bien ?*"

" *Quat' sous la livre,*" replies a weather-beaten little housewife briskly.

The girl's eyes wander round the baskets to see whether any other saleswoman has bigger cherries than those under her notice, and so wandering, they fall on Paul's upturned face. Instantly she forgets that such fruit as cherries exists.

" Anybody at home ?" asks Paul, shading his face with his hand and smiling up.

" It depends upon who 'anybody' is," she answers gravely. " If *anybody* means Madame Lange, *she* is out ; if *anybody* means Jemima, *she* is out ; if *anybody* means me, I am not out."

" I may come up, then ?"



"If you are sure that you can find your way," retorts she, laughing.

He turns and enters the house. Old Mdlle. Leroux puts her head out from the door of the dining-room, where she is sitting, mending table-linen, waggles her grey curls and yellow ribbons, and cries "*Bon jour, Monsieur !*" cheerily.

"Oh, for a brandy and soda!" sighs Paul to himself as he reaches the landing. Screwing up his fast-oozing courage, he marches in. Lenore has turned away from the window to greet him; she looks as if she were a piece of the summer sky, all blue and smiling.

"You must not stay long," she says, stretching out a ready hand to him; "it is Wednesday; and on Wednesday we are obliged to evacuate this *salon*, because it is Madame Lange's day for *receiving*. Fancy receiving *here !*" (looking round contemptuously).

"Well, are not you *receiving* here yourself now?" says Paul, trying to speak with airy nonchalance, and feeling as if he were looking extremely sheepish. "Are not you receiving *me*?"

"Oh, yes, but then you are nobody," she says, with a gay little laugh.

"Thanks."

"I mean you are only one—not a party," laughing again, and standing before him, straight and fresh and beautiful.

"She is meat for his masters"—is Le Mesurier's involuntary thought; and so thinking looks at her (unknowing it) with grave critical intentness. Under that look her great frank eyes fall suddenly, and her colour comes and goes, goes and comes, in tremulous carnation.

"I am so glad you have come," she says, beginning to talk very fast. "Mima is gone out sketching with Mdlle. Péroline, and I have been so hard-up for some-

thing to do, that I have been reduced to trying to educate Monsieur Charles. Look at him! He is rather wobbly, perhaps, but not so bad for a beginner, is he?"

So speaking, she points to where, on a small stool, Mdle. Leroux's unhappy poodle sits dismally upright on tottering shorn hind-quarters, *with his arm in a sling*; that is to say, with one poor little paw unmercifully tied, with a bit of blue ribbon, round his neck.

"*Faites mendiant Monsieur Charles!*" cries the young girl, flinging herself on her knees on the floor before him. "Up! up! Unfortunately he does not understand English!"

"Does not he?"

"He has been going through a regular course of exercises," says Lenore, gravely. "Just before you came in I put one of M. César's hats on his head, and a pair of old

Mdlle. Leroux's spectacles on his nose, and you can have no conception how like Frederic he looked."

As she kneels there, with all her blue draperies spread about the floor, and the dimples appearing and disappearing in her cheeks, a spasm of unwilling admiration contracts his heart.

"Frederic is going," he says, brusquely, turning his head away, and looking out of window, "going home, to England, to-morrow."

"Is he?" says the girl, carelessly; "why does not he come and say good-bye to us then?—or are his feelings too many for him?"

"He is talking of coming this afternoon."

"I hope he will not cry, or have a great access of emotion; he generally has at this sort of crisis; it always makes me laugh, don't you know, and that looks so unfeel-

ing," she says, glancing appealingly up at him.

"You *are* unfeeling!" he blurts out, unjustifiably, with a mistaken feeling of loyalty towards his friend.

She looks at him quickly, to see whether he is joking, but, perceiving that he is serious, says quietly, and without anger :

"Am I?—what makes you think so?"

"I gather it from your own words."

"About Frederic?" she answers, composedly. "Poor dear little gentleman!

We shall miss him very much—getting tickets and claiming luggage; but you would hardly expect me to go into hysterics over *him*, would you?"

He is silent, meditating on the utter bootlessness of his errand.

"Would you?" she repeats, pertinaciously. She has sunk down in a sitting attitude on the floor, her idle hands lie white as milk in her lap. Monsieur

Charles has availed himself of the diversion effected in his favour to abandon his upright posture, hobble off on three legs to a corner under the piano, where he spends himself in vain efforts to bite off his blue ribbon.

“It would be much better for you if you *had* some one to go into hysterics about,” says Paul, drawing a small cane chair near Lenore, and resolving to attack the fortress indirectly.

She blushes vividly ; some girls blush at *a nothing* ; other girls blush at nothing.

“Would it ?” she says.

“You will not be angry with me for speaking plainly to you ? We have seen a good deal of each other, considering how short a time it is since we first met, have not we ?” says he, with a benevolent sense of fatherly enjoyment in lecturing this fair delinquent, this embodied storm, whom only he can calm ; “but you are one of

those women who would be much better and happier *married* than *single*!"

"Am I?" in a very low voice.

"You ought to marry either a tyrant or a slave," continues he, surprised at his own eloquence; "either a fellow who would knock under completely to you, or a fellow who would make *you* knock under completely."

"And which would you recommend, may I ask?" she says, lifting her eyes archly, yet with difficulty, to his face.

"In *your* case, I think, the slave."

She looks slightly disappointed, but makes no rejoinder.

"I do you the justice to think," pursues Paul, warmed by the fire of his own rhetoric, "that a man's *looks* would not influence you much—that he would not be damned in your eyes, even if he had the misfortune not to be good-looking."

She looks at him again, bravely and

firmly this time. "You are right; I hate your beauty-men, they trespass on *our* preserves," laughing.

"If a fellow had been fond of you, ever since he had known you, then," continues Paul, drawing his chair three inches nearer, and half wishing that he were not a proxy; "if he had never cared two straws for any other woman—if he were a really good fellow at bottom, even though he might not have much to recommend him in the eyes of the world—you would not send him away *quite* without hope, even though you do turn him into ridicule now and then?"

"Into ridicule," she says, stammering; "what do you mean?"

"Well, we will not say anything about that—but, you would not send him away *quite* without hope, would you?"

Her lips tremble and form some word, but it is inaudible.

"You will at least listen to him when he comes this afternoon?" says Le Mesurier, with a sigh at his own magnanimity.

"Listen to him? To whom?" she asks, lifting her head in bewilderment, while the colour dies out of her cheeks.

"Whom? Why, of whom have we been talking all along? Frederic, of course," replies Paul, a little blankly.

There is a painful pause; the girl's face has grown ghastly, and her eyes are dilated in a horrible surprise.

"I am to understand, then," she says, in a husky choked voice, "that you are his messenger—that you have been good enough to take the trouble of making love to me off his hands?"

They have both risen, and are confronting one another. It would be hard to say which of the two, considering their different complexions, were the paler.

"Tell him," she says, making a strong

effort over herself, and speaking each slow syllable with painful distinctness, "to do his own errands next time."

As she speaks she points to the door. Half of Paul's vision is fulfilled. She has not boxed his ears—he wishes to heaven that she would—but she has turned him out of the house. He is downstairs and in the little hall before he perceives that he has left his hat behind him. He runs upstairs, three steps at a time, in his hurry to fetch it and be out of the house. He enters the *salon* hurriedly, and is half-way towards the table, when he stops short with an expression of shocked astonishment; for, on the little stiff sofa, Lenore is lying, long and limp, her face hidden in her hands, her body, and all her smart blue gown, shaken with great violent sobs.

"Good God! what is the matter?" he cries, hastily. "What has happened? Are you ill?"

Hearing his voice, she starts, and buries her face deeper than ever in the little hard bolster, as if trying to hide it for ever from the light.

“ Lenore ! Lenore !” cries the young man in high excitement, flinging himself on his knees beside her, entirely forgetting his proxy character, and speaking now altogether on his own account. “ What have I done ? Tell me ! Have I said anything to vex you ? If I thought I had I would cut out my own tongue.”

She does not stir ; but through her fingers he sees the hot tears trickling, and, stooping over her, hears her murmur almost unintelligibly, in a voice of choked rage and shame :

“ Leave me alone ! Why have you come back ? Go away !”

“ I will *never* go, until you tell me what I have done !” cries Paul, quite forgetting himself ; and, so saying, with his two hands,

by main force draws hers away from her face. "Tell me—Lenore! Tell me—*darling!*"

Her lovely eyes are drowned in tears; her cheeks are crimsoned with shameful weeping—weeping for *him*—as, with a throb of irrepressible passionate exultation, he feels. Whether divining the exultation or not, she wrenches herself away from him.

"What do you mean?" she cries, flashing at him through her tears. "I told you to go! I hate you! *Go!!*" So he goes.

* * * * *

Evening again, and bedtime. The market-women have sold all their wares, and gone home again. The old priest in the white house has just opened his door, and let out two dogs, in a whirlwind of excitement; but for them the *place* is

empty and silent. The two Misses Her-
rick are in the elder one's bedroom.
Lenore is sitting on the edge of the low
bed ; her cheeks are as white as privet-
flowers, and there are red rims round her
eyes. Jemima is devoured with curiosity
as to the cause of these phenomena, but
she does not ask.

“Jemima,” says her sister brusquely,
“let us leave this place ! Let us move on
somewhere else !”

“Leave Dinan !—leave *Mr. Le Mesu-
rier* !” cries Jemima, archly, raising her
eyebrows, as she stands before the glass,
screwing up her pale thin hair into a little
lump at the top of her head, and drawing a
white crochet net over it, in preparation
for her virgin slumbers.

“I am sick of Dinan and Mr. Le Mesu-
rier !” rejoins Lenore, petulantly.

“Sick of Dinan !—sick of Mr. Le Mesu-
rier !” exclaims the other, now thoroughly

astonished, turning round with her mouth open. "Since when?"

"Since five-and-twenty minutes past eleven this morning, if you wish to be exact," replies Lenore, with candid bitterness. "There—do not tease, but let us go!"

"Go where?"

"'Anywhere, anywhere out of the world!'" answers the young girl, falling back wearily on the bed, and dishevelled the cool trim pillow on which her sister's chaste head is to repose. "To Guingamp, to see the *pardon*."

"And what is a *pardon*, pray? for I have not the remotest idea," answers the elder, coming towards the bed, having finished her night-toilet, in the severe simplicity of which she looks at least twenty years older than in her day one.

"If you had read novels less, and your Murray more, you would not have needed

to ask that question,” replies Lenore, rolling her head about. “A *pardon* is a sort of religious fête! very dull, I do not doubt, but,”—with a tired sigh—“it all comes in the day’s work ; let us go!”





CHAPTER XII.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.

WE are at Guingamp. We have been here two hours. Two hours ago we arrived, hot and angry; hustled by thronging groups of peasants, that are pressing into the little town to receive the annual pardon of their sins, and open a fresh account with God. The Hôtel de France brims over with guests, insomuch that we have been relegated to a stuffy little chamber *au quatrième*, into which the afternoon sun beats full; hotter than ten thousand

Christmas fires. Just now we asked for hot water, to wash our dirty faces ; and a woman in a huge starched white collar, and clear cap, brought in some in a tiny *teapot*. This has put the culminating-point to our despair. It is one of those days when one's very *soul* is hot, and longs to throw off the heavy cloak of the body ; a day when one would fain take off one's flesh, and sit in one's bones, according to Sydney Smith's time-honoured waggy. It is not windless ; on the contrary, there is a very perceptible air ; but it is such air as meets you at the mouth of a furnace. Lenore has abandoned the struggle with circumstances. She has acknowledged herself beaten, and lies all along, in extremest dishabille, on the narrow bit of parquet between the two beds, where the hard oak communicates a little coolness to the back. Her head rests on a pillow that she has pulled down ; a white dressing-gown is

loosely wrapped about her, and her small bare feet wander about impatiently in the vain search for a cool spot on the hot boards. Now and again, odd, sluggish, beetleish animals, with slate-coloured bodies, crawl over her outflung arms. She has just energy enough left to shake them off, and call piteously to me to come and kill them with my shoe-heel. Our two windows and our door are open; we are trying to believe that we are in a draught. A regiment is passing through Guingamp; the officers are billeted on our hotel. Every now and then one hears the clink of a sabre and the sound of heavy feet coming down our corridor.

“Heavens, Jemima! shut the door!” cries my sister, unwilling to be exposed in her present sketchy toilette to the gaze of the French army. I spring forward and close it; and as soon as the large-busted small-waisted hero, in his hot red trousers

and tight epaulettes frock-coat, has passed, fling it wide again. I have been unpacking, my head buried in my small canvas-covered box ; it is more than woman born of woman can bear. I rise and lean out of the window. Outside a lugubrious horn is playing "*Partant pour la Syrie*," *very* slowly ; the omnibus is just driving into the courtyard.

"Poor omnibus ! poor horses !" cry I, compassionately—"how many times have they been down to the station to-day ? What a heap of luggage !"

"Jemima, my head is not high enough yet ; give me your pillow too !" calls out Lenore, lamentably, from the floor. I comply, and then return to the window, and look again at the omnibus, which is just beginning to empty its load.

"Good heavens !" ejaculate I, with animation. "Why, Lenore, there is Mr. Le Mesurier getting out ! He has a

puggry round his hat ; how odd he looks !”

Lenore is disposing two pillows and a bolster to her mind ; she gives a great start, but her head is turned from me.

“ I wish he would get a new portman-teau,” pursue I, soliloquising ; “ the ‘ P. Le M.’ on his is getting nearly effaced with age.”

The omnibus still disgorges : an old priest in a broad felt hat, and limp sash round his huge waist, with a yellow face and black teeth, yawning prodigiously ; a peasant woman, with a queer baby in a tight calico skullcap ; then another gentleman in a puggry.

“ The plot thickens,” cry I, with a sprightly air. “ Lenore, I think the friend has turned up at last. I began to fancy that he was a sort of Mrs. Harris ; but seeing is believing, and here he is !”

Silence.

"*How* good-looking!" say I, under my breath, as the second gentleman joins the first, and indicates his worldly goods to the garçon. I hear a scrambling noise behind me. Lenore is at my side; her face is white, and she peeps obliquely behind the curtain, as the hot breeze blows back her loose bright hair.

"How ugly your friend Paul looks beside him!" say I, spitefully.

"When does not he look ugly?" rejoins my junior, with bitterness.

"They are parleying with the landlady," say I, leaning out. "No doubt she is civiller to them than she was to us; I suppose two maidless, courierless, husbandless women must resign themselves to being snubbed! Ah, poor dear Frederic! how one does miss him!"

"Under which head did he come?" asks Lenore, drily—"maid, courier, or husband?"

The luggage is carried into the house; the pageant fades. I return to my packing, and ten minutes pass.

"Lenore, dear, you had better be beginning to dress," I say, hortatively; "the clock struck the quarter five minutes ago."

"I am not thinking of dressing," replies Lenore, looking enormously long, as she lies stretched straight out.

"You are going down to dinner as you are, in fact—bare legs and a dressing-gown?" say I, humorously.

"I am not going down to dinner at all," replies she, clasping her hands underneath her head.

"Not going down to dinner! What *do* you mean?" exclaim I, in high astonishment.

"Jemima, do French people *ever* open their windows? Do not they hate fresh air? Would it be possible to eat steam-

ing ragouts in a close room with fifty commercial travellers, to-day of all days ?"

" Before the omnibus came from the station, you thought it quite possible," reply I, drily.

Silence.

" Come now, did not you ?"

" Well—yes" (looking rather sheepish).

" It is on account of Mr. Le Mesurier that you are going to forego your dinner ?"

" Well—yes" (much more sheepishly).

" Lenore ! Lenore ! what has he done ?" cry I, kneeling down beside her, in a frenzy of curiosity ; " tell me."

" He has done nothing," turning her face away, and plucking at the pillow with her fingers.

" What has he said ?"

" He has said nothing."

" Did he tell you that you were not good form, according to his pet expression ?" (laughing).

"No."

"Did he make love to you?" suggest I, growing wild in my conjectures.

"No, no."

"Did he propose to you?"

"*No!* NO! NO!"

I can only see her ear, which has grown suddenly scarlet.

"What *did* he do?" ask I, at my wit's end.

"Jemima!" says Lenore, sitting up on the floor facing me, and looking very serious, "if I live to be a hundred and fifty, I will *never* tell you."

"I shall have to ask *him* then; *he* will tell me quickly enough," answer I, nettled, and rising to my feet again.

"Perhaps; very likely!" rejoins she, curtly.

"But you will come down to dinner, like a good child?" say I, coaxingly, as I wrestle with a white muslin Garibaldi,

which has shrunk in the washing, and is too small to contain my charms.

"I will not."

"But you have had no luncheon?"

"No."

"Nor afternoon tea?"

"No."

"You would probably be at a distance of half a mile from him," say I, encouragingly; "the table is as long as from here to England; I saw it."

"Jemima," replies Lenore gravely, looking at me with her large solemn eyes, "I might sit exactly opposite to him, and that would kill me on the spot."

I shrug my shoulders. "He is ugly enough, certainly," I say severely; "but he is hardly such a Medusa's head that it is death to look at him."

But Lenore is obdurate. "I had rather *die* than go down," she says, with the tragic exaggeration of youth, shaking her head,

and all the shining tangles of hair that ripple about her throat.

The bell rings, tingling and jangling through the open doors and narrow passages. I am obliged to go down alone, in my shrunk muslin Garibaldi and shabby old black-silk skirt, into a crowd of bearded English and shorn French, who are gathered to raven like wolves in the *salle à manger*. I leave Lenore lying prone on the parquet, hungry and frowning, and slaying an occasional beetle with her slipper. At dinner I sit between the landlord and a close-shaved little Breton, with a vast and greasy appetite. In silence and loneliness I raven like my neighbours. Mr. Le Mesurier fulfils my prophecy; he is half a mile off. Now and again I have a vision of his leonine beard between the thirteen or fourteen intervening guests, and of a handsome blonde head beyond him. On remounting to our garret I find that

Lenore has resumed her clothes, and is sitting on the window-sill, pelting a stray dog in the courtyard with cherrystones. Her eyes turn with a sort of anxiety to me as I enter.

"Well, well," say I, spitefully, "there was an excellent dinner; I have brought you a '*Menu*,' to show you what you have lost—

' POTAGE.

Vermicelli.

POISSONS.

Soles, fines herbes.

ENTRÉES.

Jambon Madère.

Poulets sautés. Champignons——'

"Pooh!" interrupts my sister, impatiently, "what do I care? Well, did you—did you see him?"

"I caught a glimpse now and then of his chestnut curls," reply I, banteringly; "only a glimpse, though, as he was at least a kilometre off."

“ Did he see you ?”

“ Probably not ; the dear fellow did not seem to have eyes for anything but his dinner.”

“ He did not miss me, then ?” with an accent of chagrin.

“ If he did he disguised it admirably.”

“ I might have gone down, after all.”

“ Perfectly.”

She picks up the *menu*. “ ‘ Jambon Madère ’—how good it sounds ! Why did not you ask it to walk upstairs ? Jemima, are there any biscuits left in your bag ?”

I investigate, and find half a one, and a great many dusty crumbs, upon which my sister pounces, as a kitten upon a ball of worsted.

“ I could not conscientiously say the children’s grace, ‘ Thank God for my good dinner,’ ” she says, shaking her head.
“ Jemima, let us go out.”

“ It is only eight o'clock, and the *pardon* does not begin till nine.”

“ Never mind ; there is, at all events, more to see in the town than there is here, and I shall be more likely to forget that fifteen hours must elapse before I see food again.”

So we go and pass through the courtyard, and out into the cheerful swarming streets. The prospect of having a year's sins wiped off seems pleasant, for all faces look gay. The town is thronged with exquisitely-starched clean lace caps, sticking out half a mile behind their owner's heads—thronged with broad felt hats, and loose embroidered waistcoats, trimmed with chains of silver buttons. They are like peasants in a melodrama—real benighted peasants—who have not yet begun to tell themselves that they are quite as good as their betters, and that there is no reason why they should not wear hats and bonnets

of exactly the same shape and fabric. But even here innovation is laying her ugly hand. Even Brittany is setting forth on the road that leads to chimneypot hats and shooting-coats; even here, the ancient Breton costume in all its purity is the exception; the old-world trunk hose of yesterday are ceding to the new-world trousers of to-day.

We stroll slowly up through the chattering crowd, amongst long-haired lank men, and laughing weather-beaten women. On most Breton faces is written, "Life to us is arduous." No one is drunk, and no one is swearing. "How *can* they be happy, then?" would be the thought of an English working-man; but they are, or at least they look so.

The church is already lit, though it is yet day, little points of yellow light flickering feebly in the broad white light of the summer evening. We mount the steps—

mount them gingerly, lest we should tread on the outspread legs of the crowded worshippers, crowded as swarmed bees, upon the steps and in the porch before an image there. We enter the church ; censers are swinging slowly ; the fragrant hush of a holy gloom is spread between the dim high arches—gloom that the thousand little yellow lights are fighting against. Grown men, with swart heads bent and doffed hats in their rough hands ; women ; little prim children in caps like their mothers, and petticoats down to their little heels, all—all are prostrate before each gaudy shrine, sending up their simple souls in prayer to God's great mother.

Not to her alone, however. As thickly as about the crowned and sceptred Virgin the people press around a brass head, with a glass window in its chest, and its nose blackened by the salutations of many past years and generations. Standing a few

paces off, I am watching a tall youth, who, with long thick hair hanging straight and black about his harsh melancholy face, is stooping to kiss the uncouth brazen features, when an English voice sounds low and laughing in my ear :

“Worse than the Pope’s toe, is not it?”

I give an angry start. Devotion is as catching as mumps. Without any feeling of the ridiculous I could have followed the Breton boy’s example, and kissed the blackened nose. Paul Le Mesurier is beside me, and beyond him, heedless of the praying Bretons, staring with all his blue eyes at Lenore, stands a fair handsome youth, leaning against a pillar.

“Is it wicked to introduce people in church?” asks Paul, *sotto voce*. “I cannot help it, if it is ; I have had no peace since. Scrope, let me introduce you to Miss Her-rick.”



CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

“**I** HOPE you are better, Miss Lenore,” says Paul, leaving his friend and his acquaintance together, and threading his way between the kneeling country-people to where the young girl stands with her back resolutely turned to him, and her eyes as resolutely fixed upon the high altar, aflame with lights and laden with flowers.

“Better of what?” she asks, brusquely, not turning towards him.

“I always think there must be something

radically wrong with a person who foregoes her dinner in a land where luncheon is unknown," he answers, trying to get a peep round the corner into her averted face.

"How do you know that I forewent my dinner?" she inquires sharply, glancing at him for an instant, and then looking away again as quickly.

"I saw your sister, and I did not see you."

"I dined upstairs," she answers, shortly.

He looks at her doubtfully. "Did you, really? Why?"

"I hate talking in church," she says, flashing round impatiently at him; "it is irreverent."

"So do I; the incense gets into my head. Let us go outside."

"You may go if you choose," she says, setting her back against a pillar, and resolutely ignoring his presence. "I prefer to stay here."

A little child, kneeling at her feet in close calico cap, with a rosary between its little fingers, stares up wonderingly, with wide eyes, at the monsieur and the madame, standing so erect and chattering so irreverently in the great solemn church.

"Your sister and Scrope are going down the steps now," he says, stooping a little to whisper to her in deference to the sacred place, while an amused gleam flashes in his eyes. "The procession will begin in a quarter of an hour. Come !"

She makes a half-movement of compliance.

"Mind," she says, looking at him, defiantly, "I am coming, not in the least because you ask me, but because I do not want to miss this fine sight."

The street is fuller than ever. The dusk is drawing on. Gendarmes in cocked hats and tail-coats ; tight-belted, red-legged soldiers leavening the mass of the peasants.

A woman at a stall selling candles — candles as thick as your waist; candles as thick as your wrist; candles no thicker than your finger. Every one is buying, each person laying down his francs or centimes, and walking proudly off with a hollow taper as tall as himself.

“ You have not forgiven me yet, then ?” says Le Mesurier, as he elbows a way for his companion between the woollen-shawled women and embroidered-jacketed men.

“ Forgiven you for what ?” she asks, resolutely obtuse, while her cheeks show a sudden rivalry with the poppy-bunch in her hat.

“ For my—my unlucky embassy,” he answers, with a rather awkward laugh.

She looks away from him to the illuminated church, at once bright and dark against the warm gloom of the June twilight.

"I thought it was very officious of you," she answers, coldly.

"*Officious!*" echoes he, quickly, while his own tanned cheeks catch the pretty angry poppy hue. "Do you suppose I did it for my own pleasure? Do you suppose that I ever, in all my life, had a job that I hated more?"

"Why did you undertake it, then?" asks the girl, drily.

"Because I was living in the same house with him; because I had no peace day or night: because I was sick of the sound of your name; because—poor little beggar!—he *cried*—yes, actually *cried*!—If I said 'No' once, I said it a hundred times."

"It was a pity that you did not say it a hundred-and-one times."

"I not only," continues Paul, becoming exasperated, and consequently spiteful, while his usually quiet eyes give a cold

flash—"I not only declined the office for myself, but I did all I could to dissuade him from asking you himself."

"Thank you."

"I told him that, if he *did* induce you to marry him, you would make him rue the day."

"Thank you."

"I told him how utterly unsuited you were for a parson's wife."

"Thank you."

"How much more suited to him your sister was."

"Thank you; *two* 'thank yous,' indeed—one for myself, and one for Jemima."

"He had some fatuous idea in his head of being able to *mould* you into the proper clerical shape; but I flatter myself I, at all events, succeeded in weeding *that* grotesque notion out of his mind."

"In short," says Lenore, turning sharply upon him a lovely crimson face, like a

blown rose, and proud eyes trying to wink away the mortified tears—"in short, not satisfied with hating me yourself, you have been doing your best to make one of my few friends hate me too."

"Well, at all events," retorts he, smiling, and recovering his good-humour at the same moment as she loses hers—"at all events, I did not succeed ; for, despite all my dissuasions, you see, he still wished to gain you."

The crowd grows thicker and thicker. In five minutes the procession will begin. Leaning over a little balcony above them, some English ladies and gentlemen are laughing real English laughs, unlike the high cascades of shrill French laughter.

"We shall be hustled to death down here," says Paul, lifting his high head to look over the press. "We ought to have secured a window, like those Britishers up

there. It is not too late now. Let us ask the candle-woman."

The candle-woman turns from the diminished heap of her tapers to listen politely to Paul's slow laborious English-French.

"Monsieur and madame desire a *croisette* in order to see the procession? *Mais oui, certainement.* If monsieur and madame will have the goodness to follow her, she will conduct them."

So saying, she leads them under an archway, through an empty workshop, and up a perfectly dark and filthy flight of stone stairs. The room to which they at length attain belongs to a *blanchisseuse*. It is low and poor, but very clean. Neatly-starched caps are hanging on a line across the room; two tidy little beds are in the small recesses; a crucifix hangs over the chimney-piece; and an excruciating smell from the gutter below rises up to their offended

nostrils. The owner of the apartment, having expressed an obliging hope that madame will not be "*trop gênée par l'odeur*," and having placed a hassock on the low sill for Lenore to lean her arms upon, leaves her visitors in peace. Paul stands upright and silent, with an expression of face as if he were trying entirely to repress the faculty of smell. Lenore lets her eyes wander round, and gives the reins to her imagination.

Supposing that this garret were her home—hers and Paul's; supposing that she spent her life in ironing caps, and hanging them on lines. Supposing that Paul spent his in digging in the fields, and came back at night to *galette* and cider, in a broad Breton hat and trunk hose. Good heavens! how ugly he would look! She breaks off her suppositions to smile involuntarily at the idea.

"What are you smiling at?" asks Paul,

stooping over her, and swallowing a large mouthful of *bouquet de gutter* as he speaks.

"Must I tell you *really*?" she asks, lifting her face—every dimple full of mischievous laughter—to his.

"Yes."

"I was thinking, then—mind, you *made* me tell you—how ugly you would look in a flapping felt hat and trunk hose!"

"Is that all?" he answers, carelessly. "I can assure you that I am nothing to what I was when I was a boy. In my old regiment we used to pique ourselves upon being the ugliest corps in the service; we had not a decent-looking fellow amongst us."

There is a little pause. Everybody is lighting his or her candle; one or two unlucky mortals have broken theirs off in the middle.

"Did you *really* think I should marry

Frederic?" asks Lenore presently, with abruptness.

"How could I tell?"

"But did you think it *probable*?"

"If I were a woman, I do not think I should care about undertaking him," he answers, laughing. "But you might have done worse."

She looks away, vexed—she could hardly have said why.

"He is exactly five feet two inches high," she says scornfully, drawing up her long white throat, and looking insultingly tall.

"Do you mete out your love to a man according to his inches?" he asks, leaning his arms on the back of his chair, and laughing again.

"He has a nose like a piece of putty."

"He has."

"He wears barnacles."

"He does."

"And goloshes."

"Yes."

"He plays the concertina at tea-parties."

"Does he?"

"And sings, 'I'm a nervous man.'"

"So he is."

"He turns up his trousers at the bottom when it rains."

"Well, why should not he?"

"It would be impossible," says the young girl, with trenchant emphasis, "to marry a man who did *any one* of those things; it is a thousand times more impossible to marry a man who does them *all*."

"He would let you have your own way in everything, big or little; he would let you ride rough-shod over him. It would be very bad for you, but I suppose it would please you," answers Paul, half cynically, taking in, with an uncomfortable unwilling glance, the poppy-crowned hat; the eyes, dew soft yet spirited; the fine nostrils, and

blood-red lips, half parted, as if for some sweet speech of his young companion.

“ Perhaps it would—perhaps it would not,” she answers gently. “ I have never loved anybody *yet*—never ; at least, not for long—not for more than two days ; but of course I shall some day ; and then, I suppose—I fancy—I imagine ” (stammering) “ that what he likes I shall like.”

Is it some reflection from the lights outside, or are her cheeks a shade more deeply coloured than usual, as she lifts her eyes, with a sort of tender trouble in their shady depths, to his ?

He shakes his head. “ May I be there to see ! ” he says, with a light laugh ; but there is no laugh in his eyes !—instead, an eager gravity, touched with the stirrings of a restless passion. When an uncivil woman is to *you* alone civil ; when a cold woman is for *you* alone warm ; when a high-spirited woman is for *you* alone meek,

the flattery is trebled in value. It is difficult to feel sentimental in a very bad smell, but I think, if you asked him, Paul Le Mesurier would tell you that he accomplished that feat in the little Guingamp garret. The procession is really beginning at last; out of the lit church-doors it streams, and the surging sea of heads part and cleave asunder to make way for it. Gilt and coloured lamps lead the way, carried by Breton peasants; then the relics of a saint in a gilt case; then a troop of young girls in white, clear and clean as St. Agnes; then a troop of sailors, also in white, with red sashes: two carrying a little model of a ship, two carrying a gilt anchor between them; then a wax figure in a red silk petticoat carried on a bier.

"It is *le petit* Saint Vincent!" cries the good woman of the house, in high excitement, clasping her hands—carried by Basse Bretagne peasants, clad in soutanes for the

occasion : an honour for which they will have to pay high. "Has Madame observed him—how pretty he is! how fresh! how white—as white as a little chicken?"

"And who is *le petit* Saint Vincent, when he is at home?" asks Paul, in crass ignorance of the Roman Catholic calendar.

"He was martyred at fourteen years," explains the woman; and so falls into fresh raptures.

"Oh! qu'il est gentil, le petit Saint Vincent! Il est si frais, si rose."

"If she is so much struck with *le petit* Saint Vincent, what would not she be with Madame Tussaud's establishment?" says Paul, laughing, and leaning on the sill.

He is past now : he, and his red petticoat. *La bonne Dame des hommes* follows close on his heels, borne on devout shoulders; then the brass head with the blackened nose waggles along; then grey-haired

priests in glorious flowered damask robes, holding high the effigy in ivory and gold of the slaughtered Christ; then two bishops in mitres; then a great flood of snowy caps and broad-brimmed beavers; everybody with a candle: some big, some little, but everybody with one. It is the greatest wonder how they manage to avoid setting fire to each other. All together, singing loudly, yet sweetly, they float away slowly into the distance.

Half caught by the infection of their devotion, Lenore throws herself forwards half through the rusty casement to look down the street; one sea of waving light, an undulating river of light, rather, flowing between the two dark banks of the houses on either side. The soft glamour of the summer moonrise makes glorious each little detail of the queer pretty show. The coloured lamps sparkle like real great jewels — rubies, sapphires, amethysts —

through the cool night. The young girls' dresses shine dazzlingly candescently white : even the brass head with the black nose is transmuted to gold.

"What a pleasant easy way of getting to heaven!" says Lenore, withdrawing her head. "I wish I could believe that a big candle and a kiss to little St. Vincent would take me there!"

"Do not you think we have had almost enough of this?" asks Le Mesurier, rather indistinctly, from between the folds of his pocket handkerchief, in which he has now completely enveloped his nose and mouth. "Oh, libelled Cologne! If Coleridge had but smelt Guingamp!"

So they descend into the street. The procession is to circle round the town, chanting always, and re-enter the church by another door. It will be some time before this is accomplished. Meanwhile people still swarm in the space before the

church. Women in close stiff black bonnets or hats, and big black collars to match, taking one back to the reign of Edward VI. Dark, sad-faced, lean men. These are from the very, *very* Basse Bretagne. They are so poor, so poor! They have come on foot many a weary mile, to have their sins forgiven: they will sleep in the street to-night, and at cock-crow to-morrow set forth on the trudge back to their far lone homes. Others with almost low-necked dresses, and wide loose muslin collars. They are all tramping hither and thither; talking very merrily; hustling Paul and Lenore with their stout Breton elbows; threatening them with their heavy sabots, which at any moment may come pounding down on their feet.

"You had better take my arm," says Paul, with a protecting air, as they move slowly along. "I might easily mislay you in this crush, and if I did, it would be like

looking for a needle in a bottle of hay to try and find you again."

"It would be no great harm if you *did* mislay me," she answers with a pretty air of independence. "I, who have travelled all over England, Scotland, and Ireland quite by myself, am hardly afraid of coming to harm in the half-dozen safe yards that intervene between here and the Hôtel de France."

"What business had you to travel all over England, Scotland, and Ireland by yourself?" he asks brusquely. "It was very wrong of your people to let you."

"Of course," she answers with irony, "of course, I ought to have had a maid to carry my dressing-case, and a footman to take my ticket and look after my luggage. So I will, some day, when I marry the Marquis of Carabas, or—or *Frederic*!"

"You will *never* marry Frederic!" he says vehemently, involuntarily pressing the

small hand that lies on his arm, close to his side; "*never!* NEVER!!" looking down at her face, on which the flaring candles are throwing capricious little crimson flushes.

"Shall not I?" she says, lifting her limpid innocent gaze to his, "I do not know." He is silent, at least as far as speech goes. He has forgotten the *pardon*, the white caps, the thronging peasants. His reason is drowning fast, *fast*, in the unfathomed wells of a woman's slate-blue eyes. "You told me just now that I might do worse," she says, under her breath.

"So you might," he says, with some excitement. "So you might. I said true: you might" (with a rather reckless laugh) "you might marry—*me!* who am the younger son of a younger son—have not a sixpence to bless myself with, and have the Devil's own temper to boot."

At his words her head droops forward, like a snowdrop's, weighed down with a

happy shame ; her hand falls from his arm. It is past eleven o'clock ; the people are hurrying into church again for the midnight mass. At the door every one gives up his or her candle to men stationed to receive them. There is a great heap, as high as your shoulder, already in the porch. A throng of peasants—lean, long men ; stout, square women ; big lads—come pushing by, nearly hoisting Lenore off her legs. As they pass she utters a little sharp cry of pain.

"What is it ? Are you hurt ?" asks Paul, vigorously shouldering aside the peasants, who are beginning to crowd again as thickly as ever, and digging his elbows viciously into the plump ribs of a matron behind him.

"It is nothing," she says, a little faintly ; "one of them trod on me, I think, and a *sabot* is not the lightest—there !" (beginning to laugh a little) "do not look as if you

were bent on knocking *somebody* down ; it would be sure to be the wrong somebody."

" You *are* hurt," he says, with vague indignation, gazing down solicitously at the cheeks that the little sudden pain has drained of their sweet red blood, " I know you are, only you are too spirited to own it."

" You are wrong," she says, smiling ; " from a child I have always cried out *before* I was hurt."

" Lean on me ; lean all your weight on me," says Paul obligingly, drawing her away out of the press, and into a little side street.

" Ah ! here is a door-step, let us sit down and rest."

The little street is quite dark, at least on the side where Paul and Lenore are : as dark as the Place Du Guesclin under the limes. Only on the faces of the houses

opposite the moonbeams are sliding pearl-white.

“I never *could* bear pain,” says the girl languidly, leaning her back against the closed door of the unseen house. “I never *could* understand that line of Long-fellow’s—

‘To suffer and be strong.’

‘To suffer and *scream*,’ is my version.”

There is a momentary pause between them. They are beginning to feel as if they need not be talking all the while. In the deep shade where they are sitting they can hardly see each other’s faces: they only feel one another’s pleasant proximity. The tramp, tramp of wooden shoes, the distant chant, bandied about, tossed this way and that by the frolic airs, come, now loud, now low, to their ears.

“I wonder what time it is ?” says Lenore

presently, reluctantly breaking the happy silence ; “ ten ? eleven ? twelve ? ”

“ What does it matter ? ” replies Paul indolently, clasping his hands behind his head. She is the exact opposite of everything he has hitherto thought good and fair in woman. Her very beauty—large and noble—is the reverse of the small, meek prettiness that has hitherto been his ideal, and yet—and yet it is pleasant to him to sit in the dry, warm gloom beside her, while the night winds, fresh from the tanned haycocks, fondle his hair with lightest, gentlest hands. The church clock strikes midnight : each slow stroke falling on the air like a rebuke.

“ I must go,” replies the girl, half-frightened, springing to her feet.

“ Go ! ” repeats Paul impatiently, rising too. “ Why must you ? Shall we be better off in two stuffy garrets in the Hôtel de France, *à part*, than here *together* ? ”

They are standing in the middle of the street : a tall ugly man, a tall beautiful woman (men always have the best of the bargains in this world). She has taken off her hat : it hangs with its coquettish poppies and black ribbons in her drooped right hand ; the moon is throwing little jets of silver on the waveless sweep of her hair.

"We shall at least be less likely to take cold," she answers demurely.

But Paul is losing his head. Lenore and the moonshine are too much for him.

"Cold ?" he repeats, crossly. "You never thought about cold that happy night when we went on the Rance together."

"*That happy night*, when you tried so hard to get out of going, and said it was time to go to bed," she answers mockingly, while her eyes for the moment lose their love light, and glitter maliciously. He laughs rather consciously. "That happy night when you soaked all the colour out

of my blue ribbons, and drowned my best hat for me," continues she gaily. "No, no! we will have no more happy nights. My wardrobe would not stand it! Come, let us go!"





CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.

IT is too late now," says Lenore, with a sulky pout, leaning her arms on the top of the wrought-iron rails of the balcony ; "l'Américaine is at the door."

We are no longer at Guingamp. We have moved on to Moirlaix, and are lodged in a certain hostelry, that is scented through and through with the ill-odour arising from the very unclean stable over which it is built :

"I do not wish to tell its name,
Because it is so much to blame."

No one dislikes the smell of a *clean* stable. The warm, pungent odour that greets you, when you go to see your friend's hunters need offend no well educated nostrils; but the terrific reek that ascends from the lodgings of Breton beasts of hire, that you swallow, *nolens volens*, in bed, in your bath, with your tea, with your cider—which enters not only your nose and mouth, but even your very eyes and ears—is trying to the least sensitive organs.

We two are seated—by-the-by, Lenore is standing—in a little *salon* whose balcony overlooks the street, and whence we may spy the passers below, keep a look-out on Lozach, *débitant de boissons*, opposite, and refresh ourselves with a slightly varied version of essence of manure. A great bowpot, full of immense roses, stands at my elbow: each several rose smells mightily of tobacco: a phenomenon accounted for by the fact that the *salon* is daily resorted

to for smoking and coffee-drinking purposes by the noble army of commercial travellers who breakfast and dine at the table d'hôte. When "*ces messieurs*," as the landlord, with innocent irony, calls them, have retired, we are permitted to enter, and work our own wild will among the tobaccoed roses and the jingling old spinet in the corner.

"It is too late," says Lenore, from the balcony ; "l'Américaine is at the door."

"It would be very easy to send it away again, I suppose."

"I suppose it would."

"I do not believe that there is anything to see at Huelgoat," say I, sceptically, turning over the leaves of my familiar spirit, 'Murray,' and hunting among the Hs in the index.

"I dare say not."

"Nothing but lead-mines and a reading-desk," say I, having found the place.

“ Oh, indeed !”

“ It is, then, merely for the pleasure of a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Le Mesurier that you are going ?” cry I, raising my voice a little, for fear that the lazy wind that is ruffling the smoky roses and swaying the muslin curtains may disperse my gibe.

“ Merely for the pleasure of the *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Le Mesurier, as you felicitously observe,” replies my sister, with baffling candour, leaving the balcony, and coming to stand defiantly before me, with her chin a little raised, and her hands folded behind her back, in her favourite attitude, like a child saying its lesson. Some people’s clothes look as if they were *thrown* on ; some as if they were put on ; some as if they *grew* on. Lenore’s is the latter case.

“ I should have thought that you must have had a surfeit of those delights by now,” say I, disdainfully, with all an out-

sider's intolerance for the insipid repetitions of love-making.

" I have had exactly nine," answers Lenore, growing grave, while a happy absorption fills her eyes ; " I think " (smiling) " I must make it a dozen ; and then, perhaps, if Mr. Scrope is very good, I may give him a turn."

I feel vexed, and, unable and unwilling to explain why, rise, and walking over to a little *étagère* in the corner, begin to fiddle with some deplorable spar boxes with " A Present from Brighton " on them : traces, even here of the indefatigable Briton, who has inscribed his name and that of his blacking on the pyramid top. Lenore sits down at the piano, and opens it.

" You might be *man and wife*, from the way in which you travel about together," say I, fuming.

" Perhaps we are," answers Lenore, with a laugh, her low rippling laughter mixing

pleasantly with the crash she is making among the bass notes ; “ to the prophetic eye present and future are one.”

“ Heaven forbid !” say I devoutly. “ I cannot fancy calling that man ‘ Paul,’ and kissing him, as I suppose one would have to do if he were one’s brother-in-law ; one would lose one’s self in the intricacies of that scarlet beard.”

“ It is *not* scarlet !” cries Lenore, in a fury, wheeling round on the music stool. “ It is not even red.”

“ It is like Graham’s hair in ‘ Vilette,’ ” reply I gravely, “ whose colour his friends did not dare to specify, except when the sun shone on it, and then they called it golden.”

A little pause.

“ I do not think that two young women in our position *can* be too careful,” say I primly, “ and really, Lenore, it is hardly advisable.”

" Advisable !" interrupts my sister, jumping off her stool and giving a little stamp, while her pretty pink nostrils dilate with angry wilfulness. . " I hate the word ; it is a mean, sneaking, time-serving word. Either a thing is right or it is wrong : if it is not right, it is wrong, and if it is not wrong, it is right. If it is not wrong to take a drive on a summer day with a man whose society——"

She stops as if she had been shot. The door has opened, and the man whose society—— is looking in and saying,

" Miss Lenore, are you ready ?"

There is a flushed confusion on his honest ugly face, as if he had overheard Lenore's last speech ; and, indeed, as she has always a singularly pure clear enunciation, and declaimed this last sentence in a high key and with a distinct and trenchant emphasis, I do not see how the poor man could well help it.

“*Am I ready?*” says Lenore, with an awkward laugh, turning away to hide her discomfiture. “That is amusing! A man keeps one waiting an hour and a half, and then comes and asks innocently, ‘Are you ready?’”

At the door stands the “*Américaine*,” so called because more *un*-like an *Américaine* than any other conceivable vehicle; a little heavy jingling rattletrap, with a hood in the last stage of shabbiness. A little old mare in her dotage, and a tall colt, hardly come to years of discretion, compose the team. One has bells, the other has none; both are smothered under immense sheep-skin collars, like leviathan doormats; the flies are teasing them sadly. A noble army of beggars—

“——Men and boys,
The matron and the maid,”

press round with obliging *empressement*;

old blear-eyed men beggars, capped and long-frocked little girl beggars—lame boy beggars—beggars with ingeniously horrible malformations of nature, well brought forward into notice.

"So this is a walking tour through Brittany, is it, Paul?" asks Mr. Scrope pensively, as we emerge from the door. He is leaning against the doorpost, looking very handsome, very lazy, and half asleep, as he mostly does. "So *this* is the pedestrian exercise that was to make you two stone lighter by next season! Oh, Miss Herrick!" shaking his head at Lenore, and smiling reproachfully with his indolent blue eyes, "how much you have to answer for!"

They get in. I think they feel rather foolish, sitting perched up on high, side by side. There is something absurdly nuptial about this departure.

"Go on! what are you stopping for?" cries Paul, in the worst possible French.

The driver says "*Saprr—r—r*," the poor beasts stretch to their work ; the old rope traces strain ; the grin of expectation vanishes from the beggars' faces.

"Do not you feel as if we ought to throw old shoes after them?" asks Mr. Scrope, turning languidly to me, as the bells go tinkle tinkle down the street. I smile. "Would a *sabot* do as well? I might borrow one." The jingling has ceased. They are fairly gone.

"What shall *we* do, Miss Herrick, now that our natural protectors have left us?" says my companion, appealing piteously to me, as I stand on the broiled and broiling steps under the umbrella with which I have judiciously furnished myself ; while the sun catches his yellow hair and the young soft moustache that rather directs attention to than hides his handsome mouth—the feature that is seldomer than any other in the human face good. "What shall we do?"

Shall we hire a couple of jackasses, a
out riding ?"

" Rather too hot, I think."

" It *is* hot, now you speak of it. P





CHAPTER XV.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

CERTAINLY it is sleepy work, driving to Huelgoat. The day is one of those that remind one of a bad painting or of the landscape on a papier-maché tea-tray: garish, staring, in-artistic. The sky is all dead blue, and the trees are all dead green. Jingle, jingle, jingle, tingle, sound the bells; jig, jog, with their noses down to their knees, go the horses along the road—that is white as flour, and quite as powdery. Up long-backed hills, down long-backed hills; up,

down, up, down; there is no end to it. The driver forgets to flick his whip, and cry "*Allez! allez!*" He sits swaying to and fro in the sunshine, fast asleep. He looks old and starveling, as if he had never had enough to eat in all his life. Great sweeps of fern and gorse spread around, only broken by little miserable patches of oats and *blé noir*; endless reaches of desolate moorland—grey, barren, silent. It makes one shiver, even in this broiling noon, to think how the north wind must rush and rage over these eerie wolds, these awful *landes*, on a January night. Jig, jog, jig, jog. The road still twists, twists always, like a white snake writhing its endless folds about the hills.

"I wonder how they are getting on," says Lenore, after a twenty minutes' silence, blinking in the sun, and trying to believe that she is enjoying herself.

“*They*. Who?” asks Paul, with an absent start.

“Jemima and Mr. Scrope, to be sure.”

“I do not know about your sister, I’m sure,” replies Paul, leaning back, and resting his head against the stained and discoloured leather of the old hood; “I have not known her long enough to say; but as I knew Scrope when he was in round jackets, and have seen a good deal of him, off and on, ever since, I can tell you to a nicety what he is doing, if you wish.”

“What?”

“He is lying on his back, in the coolest place he can find, and drinking claret-cup, if he can ask for it in French, which I doubt; but if not, brandy and seltzer, cider and siphon, anything—certainly *drinking*; and as certainly making love to some one—the landlady, the *femme de chambre*, your sister, perhaps, if she does not snub him as resolutely as she does me.”

“ Poor dear Mima ! ” says Lenore, laughing. “ She will be sorely puzzled to know how to take it if he does.”

“ If it is not your sister it is somebody else,” says Paul, tilting his hat over his nose, and closing his eyes ; “ he is the sort of fellow that one could not trust alone in the room with his own grandmother for five minutes.”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Generally,” pursues Paul, in a sleepy voice, “ after a two days’ acquaintance, he proposes to every woman he sees ; if she refuses him, he asks her to be a sister, or mother, or aunt, or something of the sort, to him ; if she accepts him he is off by the next train, and never’ heard of (by *her*, at least) again.”

“ He must remind one of the saying that the best way to be rid of a troublesome friend is to lend him a five-pound note.”

Their talk flags ; the dust seems to have

got into it ; there is no juice in it. A little public-house stands by the road-side, a bunch of box over the door, to show that they sell cider there. Inside, a woman with a distaff, an old old woman, all grin and wrinkles, every wrinkle filled up with dirt. Immensely tall pigs, with finely-arched backs, noses like greyhounds, and legs like antelopes, throng about the door. Now and again a primitive cart passes ; the shaggy unkempt horses prick their ears and rear and plunge, as if they had never seen a civilised being before. With hardly less astonishment do their wild-eyed drivers stare. It is three o'clock and past by the time that Paul and Lenore reach Huelgoat —Huelgoat, sitting in the sunshine, at the *very* end of the world, beside her still grey tarn.

“I am ravenous,” says Lenore, gaily, as they jingle up the dead grey street. “I ate no breakfast, did you? One cannot

eat in that smell. What shall we have ? Cutlets, trout ? There ought to be trout in that lake."

"Do not be too sanguine," answers Paul, shaking his head ; "it is uncharitable to judge by appearances, but from a bird's-eye view of Huelgoat I should say that white-bait was hardly less unlikely than trout *or* cutlets."

No one, it seems, at first sight, lives at the Hôtel de Bretagne, at least no one appears. They descend from the Américaine, and enter a flagged passage, with two doors exactly opposite each other, one on each side. That on the left is open, and gives admittance into a bright and fireless kitchen — innocent of the very faintest odour of cooking. A woman, in a cap that is a cross between a night-cap and a chimney-pot of the hooded kind, comes to meet them, with an immense white collar and a clean sour face.



“What did Monsieur and Madame wish?”

“Monsieur and Madame wish for something to eat, *now, immediately, à l’instant.*”

“Monsieur and Madame can have some bread and butter—some cheese; there is unhappily nothing else in the house *au moment.*”

“*Nothing else in the house!*” repeats Lenore with angry volubility. “Why there is a *chicken!* I saw it. I see it now, *there!*” pointing with her finger to where a long lean cock lies, lank and plucked, in a meat-safe in the passage.

“There is, as Madame has observed, a chicken, a superb chicken, but he is for the table d’hôte.”

“But we are dying, perishing, *affamés!*” cries Lenore, eking out her uncertain talk with plentiful gesticulation.

“Monsieur and Madame can have some

bread and butter—some excellent cheese—an omelette."

It takes ten minutes of entreaties, expostulations, prayers, before she can be over-persuaded to the sacrifice of the "*superb*" chicken. On being asked how soon it will be dressed, she answers, "Half-an-hour;" and being earnestly besought to abridge that time, repeats inexorably, "*Une demi-heure, à peu près.*"

"Let us go into the *salle à manger* and shut the door," says Lenore despondently. "It will drive me mad to see her pottering and dawdling about; and if we watched her she would only potter and dawdle the more, to spite us."

A quarter of an hour passes. They devour huge slices of the loaf, and make a clearance of three miserable little dry sardines, brought in on a plate. They look out of window at the silent street, call it Welsh, Irish—every ugly name they can

think of. Lenore could not coquet with Paul now, were she to be shot for it; neither could Paul say anything affectionate, even if under the same penalty. They are both far too hungry.

"Look if it has gone out of the meat-safe yet," says Lenore presently.

"If it has not," replies Paul gravely, "I am aware that it will be unmanly—but I shall cry."

He opens the door and peeps out into the passage.

"It is there still!"

Despair for a few moments—then rage; then a rush into the bright kitchen opposite, bright with pewters and coarsely painted pottery plates; bitter reproaches, quickly sunk in hopeless silence.

"Madame is unreasonable; Madame must have patience; the fire is not yet lit!"

They return to the *salle à manger*, and

Lenore sits down on the flagged floor, while her pretty blue gown makes what children call "a cheese" all round her.

Paul stands over her in gloomy silence.

"How well I can understand now how shipwrecked mariners eat one another," she says, looking up at him pathetically.

After a while a few coals of charcoal make a feeble glimmer in the open hearth. The enemy with the chimney-pot cap takes the fowl—his sex plainly declared by the comb which still adheres to his head—and runs him once or twice through the flame to singe him ; then, taking a few warm (not hot) coals, places them in a sort of tin box, and lays the carcass in the box at some distance from them.

"As if those wretched, half-dead embers could ever cook anything !" cries Lenore, indignantly. They sit stupidly gazing through the two open doors.

"How does he look ?"

"There is not a sign of cooking upon him," answers Le Mesurier morosely. "He is as white as when he went in."

"He will be done only on one side," says Lenore, half crying; "is not she going to turn him at all?"

She comes in presently, and turns him over deliberately; then goes with unfeeling calmness about her other occupations.

"Well! *Now?*" (eyes sparkling, and her long neck stretched to look into the kitchen).

"There is a slight shade of brown coming over him," says Paul, with a smile. Ten minutes more, and he appears; his legs and arms are all straggling wildly about, his skin is burnt blacker than any coal, and his flesh is as pink as a bit of catchfly; but he is—oh, how delicious!

By-and-by, after he is eaten, and nothing but memory is left of his charms, they stroll out together down the dumb stone

street, where tiny old-world children, in tight white skull-caps, not showing a curl of their baby hair, are playing gravely in the gutter, with their long petticoats flapping about their heels and entirely hiding their little fat legs—where, just inside the doors, women in the home dishabille of filthy white chimney-pots sit at their spinning-wheels.

Coming to Huelgoat is synonymous with putting back the clock two hundred years. Down by a mill, along a narrow path, across a ferny slope, to see the *pierre tremblante*. Great rounded boulders lie about like couchant elephants; dusky fir woods clothe the hills, that rise so close and stern, and on their barren breasts great grey granite masses heave huge shoulders out of the heathy ground. Below, a little brawling stream slides coily under the great rocks, then bubbles coldly out again, talking to itself all the way and to the

small marsh flowers that grow about its low brim ; a little mountain beck, like a flashing smile on the valley's lips, like a silver chain about the hill's cool feet.

Paul and Lenore have been climbing the hills, have been straying amongst the piny odours, have been pushing and fighting their way through the thick bilberry bushes, and now they are hot and tired. Lenore is kneeling on a flat grey stone, and, stooping low down, lays her mouth to the clear water and drinks.

" I am too old and stiff to be so supple," says Paul, with a smile of admiring envy ; " make me a cup of your hands ; I have no letter in my pocket to make a leaky cornucopia of."

She complies, gravely. Joining her white hands together, she dips them into the water, and then holds them up for him to drink. He has to drink very fast, as the water runs out nearly as quickly as it

came in. Then she stoops again and bathes her head in the stream. The water rolls in diamond beads from her hair, and on to her turquoise blue gown, as she kneels on the broad grey stone ; long-legged flies are walking about on the stream ; little blue butterflies hover round like flying flowers, that have grown tired of their stalks, and are gone visiting their kinsfolk. Paul is stretched on the short fine grass on the other side of the brook, but yet not a span off. His elbows rest on the ground and his hands are buried in his bronze beard. It is all so pretty, so lorn, so silent, as if, long ago, God had made this fair spot and then forgotten it.

"Mr. Le Mesurier," says Lenore suddenly, "do you think it was wrong of me to come with you here to-day ? I would not ask any other man, because I know I should only get some silly civil speech : but I know that *you* will tell me the truth, how-

ever disagreeable ; perhaps ” (laughing)
“ with all the more alacrity, the more unflattering it may be.”

Paul lifts his head and stares at her in some surprise at the demand made upon his veracity.

“ Since when has your conscience grown so tender ? ” he asks evasively. “ Who has been putting such an idea into your head ? —for I am sure it never grew there of itself.”

“ Jemima,” she answers, dabbling her hand and her pocket-handkerchief in the bright water, with more than a child’s delight. “ When you came in this morning she was in the middle of telling me how improper it was. I do not mind *her* ; she is an old maid—or at least, in her, coming events cast their shadows before ; but I want *you* to tell me. Is it wrong, incorrect, *hasardé*, as the French say ? ”

“ Not one of the three, in the very least,”

he answers warmly. "The worst that any one can say of it is, that it is a little, a very little, unconventional."

"The woman with the eyes like a shot partridge would not have done it, I suppose?"

"Probably not." Then, seeing her look mortified: "If the woman with the eyes like a shot partridge has a fault, it is being in the slightest degree in *too* great bondage to Mrs. Grundy. She would hardly dare to go along the road to Heaven unless she knew that many very respectable people had gone there before her."

Silence, save for the low small noise that the glossy bees make in visiting from heather-bloom to heather-bloom. The high sun is already sloping westwards; in two or three hours one will be able to look him in the face.

"If I had but Joshua's gift!" says Paul, sighing, as he lies gazing up at the flawless

sapphire above him. "If I could but say, with any hope of being obeyed, 'Sun, stand thou still!'"

"Why *should* you say so?" asks Lenore, opening her eyes as she busily wrings out her pocket-handkerchief, and lays it on the grass to dry. "Why should you *wish* to stop him? He will last quite long enough to light us home, and that is all we want him for to-day."

"*To-day!* Yes," answers Le Mesurier, sighing again; "but when one thinks that, in all human probability, he will shine upon us two together at Huelgoat never again!"

"He will shine upon us two together at Morlaix," says Lenore playfully, "which will be much the same, will not it? Probably he will not only shine upon us, but will freckle us a good deal."

"He will not shine upon us *together* anywhere long," says Paul, rather crossly, as if vexed by her gaiety.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I am going back to England the day after to-morrow ; that is all."

"Going !" she repeats, while a cowardly, treacherous white spreads over cheeks and lips, and her wet hands drop forgotten into her lap.

"Yes ; I am going," answers Paul, his vain man's heart all astir at sight of her change of countenance, and his face gaining all the colour hers has lost ; "my people, who have never hitherto shown much propensity for my society, have suddenly found that I am indispensable to them."

She turns her head aside, and looks away towards the piny hills.

"So you are going away ?" she says, almost under her breath. "Well " (forcing a smile) "considering how inauspiciously our acquaintance began, we have got on very well together, have not we ?"

"*Very* well," answers Paul, emphatically.

"We have managed to agree pretty well, although I am *not your style*," with a perceptible accent on the last three words.

"*Not my style?* What *do* you mean?" he asks, reddening consciously.

"Although you *did* think it such a hardship coming on that tea picnic with us down the Rance; although you *did* look at your watch so often and sigh so heavily. I thought once or twice" (laughing a little) "that you would have blown out Frederic's new-lit fire."

"Is it possible?" cries Paul, tragically; not in the least struck by the ridiculousness of the offence imputed to him, but rather by the state of mind in himself that such an offence evidenced.

Lenore bends her eyes on the ground; her fingers, ignorant of what they are doing, pluck at the fine blades of grass and

dwarf yellow flowers about her; her figure has a drooped air of languor.

"There was a pretty redness in her lip,
A little riper and more lusty red
Than that mixed in her cheek; 'twas just the difference
Betwixt the constant red and mingled damask."

"Yes, we have got on very well," she says, in a tone that is half a whisper and half a sigh. Paul has risen to his feet, and now steps across the narrow barrier of the brook that parts them, and stands over her, with his hands in his pockets, and a strong emotion agitating his plain burnt face.

"Lenore," he says impetuously, "do not you think that we should get on very well together *always*?"

If only premeditated proposals came to pass, every parish register would be the poorer by two-thirds of its marriages. When he set off this morning from Morlaix, Paul had as much idea of offering

himself to Jemima as to Lenore, only he would not believe it now if you were to tell him so. At his words she springs to her feet, and a slight quiver passes over her features.

“I think,” she says, trying to laugh, “that we should quarrel a good deal.”

“Lenore!” says Paul, earnestly, “I do not know why I am asking you. You are not in the least the sort of woman that I ever pictured to myself as my wife, and I have no earthly business to ask *any* woman; my face” (with a rather grim laugh) “is my fortune, and you see what a handsome one that is, and yet—and yet—tell me, Lenore, am I worth living in a garret on cold mutton with?”

She gives him no speech in answer; only she stretches out her arms, and her eyes flash softly through her happy tears: he must read his answer there.

The beck tinkles at their feet; the butter-

flies hover about their heads; the sun gives them his broad, warm smile; and three little Breton girls, going a bilberry-ing, with tin mugs in their hands, stand on a neighbouring slope, aghast at the manners and customs of the British. She is lying in his arms, and he is kissing the beautiful lips that have kissed none but him, that (as he confidently thinks) will kiss none but him ever again.

"Are you sure," asks Lenore, presently, lifting her ruffled head from his breast, and smiling through her tears, "are you sure that you are asking me for yourself *this* time?"

"*Quite* sure."

"That it is not for Frederic?"

"No."

"Nor for Mr. Scrope?"

"No."

"Are you quite, *quite* sure that you like me?" she asks, drawing a little away from

him, and reading earnestly his grey eyes, as if with more confidence in *their* truth than in that of his mouth.

"I am not at all sure of it," he answers, laughing. "You are not the sort of person that any one *could like*, but I am very sure that I *love* you, if that will do as well."

"Better than the shot partridge woman?" she asks, smiling, half ashamed of her question, and yet with solicitude.

"*Immeasurably* better!" answers he, devoutly.

At that she seems satisfied, but in a very little while her restless doubts return.

"Paul," she says, withdrawing herself from his arms, "you have not yet asked me whether I like you."

"I suppose," he answers, gaily, "that I thought actions spoke louder than words."

"You did not think it worth while ask-

ing me," she says, reddening painfully, "because you were so sure of what the answer would be ; you *knew* I was fond of you ; you have known it all along ! Oh, why did not I hide it better ?" clasping her hands together, and flinging herself down, disconsolately, on the grass.

" I knew nothing of the kind," answers Paul, pulling his moustache, and looking very much embarrassed ; " if, indeed, you had been any other woman, I might have been conceited enough to fancy from your manner that you did not dislike me, but as you are not in the least like any woman I ever saw in my life, I could not possibly argue from their manners and customs to yours."

" You are very kind," she answers, shaking her head, " trying to put me in good humour with myself, but you cannot : I have been a lame hare—a lame hare !"

" Do not call my wife ugly names !" cries

Paul, playfully, yet distressed, sitting down beside her ; “ it is very bad manners.”

“ If you had been less sure of me, you would have valued me a hundred times more,” says the girl, with bitter mortification, fixing her solemn, tragic eyes on his face.

“ Do not get into the habit of talking such nonsense,” retorts he, brusquely ; all the more brusquely perhaps from a latent consciousness that there is a grain of truth in her self-accusation. “ How many times must I tell you that I was *not* sure of you ; that I did not know but that you might give me my *coup de grace* with as little remorse as you did West ?”

How Mr. Le Mesurier reconciles this astounding fib to his conscience, I must leave the reader to determine.

Another little silence ; the bilberry children have disappeared in the wood ; the long-legged flies are still promenading

on the stream ; the sleepy mellowness of afternoon is upon everything.

"Paul," says Lenore again presently, not in the least convinced by her lover's perjuries, and lifting a charming quivering face to his ; "can you *swear* to me that you did not ask me because I looked grieved at the news of your going ? Can you swear to me that you like me *always* ? Not only *now, here*, but *always*, all day and all night—even when you are away from me."

"Even when I am away from you, strange to say," he replies, heartily, drawing her fondly towards him.

"I know," she continues, not yielding to his caresses, but rather resisting them, "that while I am with you, I please you, as any man is pleased with the company of a young, good-looking woman, who has evident delight in his society ; but when you are away from me—alone, in your own

room at night, quietly thinking over things—do you like me *then*? do you approve of me *then*?”

He looks a little pained at first by this puzzling catechism; then, putting an arm of fond and resolute ownership round her, answers gravely, but without hesitation :

“ Lenore, since you are bent on tormenting yourself and me with these ridiculous doubts and questionings, I will tell you the *very* truth : I would not have loved you if I could have helped it; for the last three weeks I have been trying *honestly* to dislike you. I have told myself over and over again—yes, I have even told West too, that I did not admire you; I have pretended to hold you cheap; I have said that you were *fast*—that I could see you had a temper—that you were bad form—that you were not even pretty—God forgive me for such a lie,” breaking off suddenly, to smooth her ruffled hair.

"Well; go on," she says, curtly, impatient of the interruption, while her cheeks wear as deep a dye as the strewn petals of a red rose.

"I felt—well, to tell truth, I feel now" (laughing) "that you were not a woman that a man would have an easy time with. Lenore, I shall be frantically jealous of you; I shall very often fly into a rage with you——"

"There," cries Lenore with spirit, "we shall be quits; for I never stayed in the house with any one for a fortnight in my life, without quarrelling *à l'outrance* with them."

"You are," continues Paul, still smiling, "as unlike as it is possible to be to the patient Grizzle, the amiable fond drudge, that I have always imagined trudging humbly through life beside me! I cannot fancy *you* trudging humbly beside any one; you would be more likely to stalk on *in*

front of them, with your head up—but yet—but yet, Lenore—look me in the face for as long as you please—the longer the better—I defy even *you* to find any falsehood there—I would not change you now for all the Grizzles in Christendom.”

“Would not you?” she says, softly laying her head caressingly down on his shoulder, “I am glad!”

“Poor darling!” he says, with a passionate pang of self-reproach, “I wish I was better worth being glad of.”

Neither speaks for a few moments, and both are happy. Lenore, womanlike, is the first to break silence.

“Paul,” she says, lifting her head from its new resting place, laying a hand with innocent familiarity upon each of his shoulders, and scanning closely his face, which looks even less handsome under this minute inspection than when viewed from the respectful distance at which his

acquaintance are wont to regard it, "do you know that I am not at all nice ? Not at all ; quite the contrary. I would not have told you, only that I am sure that you would very soon have found it out for yourself : hitherto, I have not cared whether I was or no ; but I am not a nice person, certainly. As yet you have seen only the best of me."

"The best of you !" cries Le Mesurier, raising his brows in feigned dismay, "if what I have seen be the *best* of you, what *must* the worst be ?"

She smiles. "You remind me of the man, who, when his ladylove refused him, saying that she wondered how he could have the presumption to propose to her, as she had never shown him anything but her coldest manner, answered that if such were her coldest manners, he shuddered to think what her warmest must be." The laugh becomes a duet. "Do not you remem-

ber," continues Lenore, gravely, "what Miss Richland says in Goldsmith's 'Good-natured Man?' 'Our sex are like poor tradesmen that put all their best goods to be seen in the windows.' All *my* best goods are in *my* windows."

"Why do not you leave me to make these discoveries for myself?" asks Paul, half vexed, half playfully. "Why do you tell me? it is like telling me the end of a novel."

"Do not you see," she says, eagerly, "that I want you to know the worst of me at once?"

"And about how bad *is* the worst?" asks Paul jestingly, as he takes her two hands, and puts them about his own neck, while he gazes at his leisure into the shady depths of her deep-fringed eyes, "is it that you have a will of your own?—I know that already—I knew it from the day when you first burst upon my dazzled sight in

Stéphanie's cap and petticoat—is it that you snub your sister? I know that too—is it——”

“Oh do not joke,” she says, earnestly, “it is no joking matter, but I will try to be nicer for the future; I *will* indeed, for your sake! I will begin directly—to-morrow.”

“Why not to-day?” (smiling).

“I shall have no temptation to resist to-day,” she answers simply. “To-day, I am too happy to be wicked.”

Again he presses her to his heart, with a feeling of remorse, as one that has been given a good gift, and prizes it not according to its worth.

“Oh poor child!” he cries with emotion, “why are you happy? is it because you have made the worst and most losing bargain ever woman made since first this cheating world began?”

“I have been so lucky all my life,” she says with a pensive smile, “from a little

child, I have always succeeded in getting what I wanted ! You are the first person whose love I ever wished for, and—is it forward of me to tell you so ?—I wished for it from almost the first day I saw you, rude and surly as you were to me—and now—so you tell me, do not you ?—against your will I have got even that.”

“ There is not much doubt of it,” answers Paul, with more emphasis than eloquence. “ Oh perverse pretty darling, what blessed contrariety ever induced you to take a fancy to such an ugly ill-conditioned devil as I ? Most women hate the sight of me.”

“ And you return the compliment with interest,” rejoins Lenore, smiling ; “ so Frederic told us. That was what first made me think of you. Oh Paul” (her gravity returning, and the unbidden tears rising to her eyes) “ was there ever an instance of any one being happy always ? or

shall I have to pay for my good luck by-and-by ?”

“ Do not talk like that,” says the young man hastily, with a pained look, “ it makes me feel as if I had been misleading you, and yet God knows I have not done so consciously. Oh love !” (with an accent of bitterness) “ you will find soon enough that there is nothing alarmingly fortunate in the lot you have drawn.”

“ If you think,” she answers, with a spirited smile, “ that I am deceiving myself in my estimate of you, you are mistaken ; I am not elevating your excellences at the expense of my own ; if I am not remarkably amiable, neither I am sure are you ; we shall probably lead a cat and dog life, to the edification of all our neighbours—but yet, try as you may to persuade me to the contrary, it still seems—it will *always* seem to me—good luck to belong to you. Come, let us go !”

As she speaks, she rises, and stands beside the little quarrelsome stream, tall, and straight, and beautiful, with a grave fond smile on her shut lips, and a bulrush wand in her small white hand; his own, his very own, and not another man's!





CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT JEMIMA SAYS.

IT is half-past eight, but still broad daylight. Paul and Lenore have not yet returned. I wish they would. "Good night!" say I, closing the old spinet at which I have been warbling, in the little *salon* that overhangs the street.

"Are you going to bed?" asks Mr. Scrope, dissuasively, "do not." He is lying on three chairs, meditating, like Mr. Pickwick, with his eyes closed.

"I have a head-ache," I answer rather

crossly. "Can *no one* keep awake in my society?" is my reflection.

"Please sing 'Good night, good night, beloved,' before you go," says he, lifting his blue eyes with lazy entreaty to my face, "*do.*"

I laugh: "You are like the man in 'Sam Slick,' who said to the girl, '*Thing* me that little *thong* again!' when she had already sung it twice. I sang 'Good night, good night, beloved,' ten minutes ago."

He first looks confused, and then laughs with boyish heartiness. "Did you? You see it was a better lullaby than you had any idea of."

"Good night!" say I, tendering my hand for the second time.

"Do not go!" he says again, drawing himself languidly up; "it is only half-past eight."

"Is not it as well to sleep comfortably and peacefully in bed, as uncomfortably

and spasmodically on three hard-bottomed chairs ?”

“ I think not” (rising and yawning). “ In order to get to bed one has the trouble of going upstairs. Now, if one had some one to *carry* one up it would be different.”

“ I wish they would come back,” say I, uneasily stepping out into the little balcony. “ It is a great shame of Mr. Le Mesurier keeping Lenore out so late.”

“ How do you know that it is not she that is keeping *him* out ?”

I drew myself up with dignity : “ What *do* you mean ?”

“ I meant no offence,” he answers, good-humouredly ; “ only from the very little I know of your sister, I should say that she was not the sort of person to let any one make her come in, or go out, against her own will.”

“ You do not like Lenore,” say I, lean-

ing my arms on the rails and gazing down the street.

“To tell you the truth,” he answers, confidentially, “she frightens me out of my wits! *You* do not in the least; but when I see her come into the room, my first impulse is to take to my heels, and hide in dens and caves.”

“Is it,” say I, surprised. “Why?”

“Her eyes go through one like *gimlets*,” he says, his handsome young cheeks flushing; “and she has a way of looking over and under and through and on each side of one, without affecting to perceive one.”

“Has she?” I say, wonderingly; “I never observed it.”

“Perhaps it is only *I* who am invisible to the naked eye,” rejoins he, with an indolent smile. “She perceives *Paul*, no doubt: we can all see that, of course.”

“There is no accounting for taste,” I

answer, tritely. "Bottom and Titania are of very frequent occurrence nowadays."

"I did not mean *that* exactly," says Mr. Scrope, too loyal to his friend to relish the ingenious comparison that I have instituted between him and the ass-headed weaver of Athens. "I am not in the least surprised at Miss Lenore's preferring Paul to me, for he is the very best fellow in the world, and consequently I *can* only be the second best."

"*Very best!*" cry I, carping at such unlimited praise bestowed upon a person whose merits I have, as yet, been unable to discover. "How *very best?* Most religious, do you mean?"

He looks down. "No, not that, I suppose."

"Steadiest?"

He smiles significantly. "Hardly! poor old Paul! They used to call him Lincoln and Bennett in his old regiment, because he was as mad as two hatters."

"Most amiable?"

"Well no, I think not; Paul is a queer-tempered fellow; he can be very nasty when he likes."

"In what, then," inquire I, astonished, "may I ask, does his super-eminent merit consist?"

"It knocks one up so much this hot weather, explaining things," answers he, stretching. "All the same, he *is* the very best fellow in the world."

"That is the Italian mode of argument," say I, smiling, "which consists in repeating the disputed assertion over a certain number of times, in exactly the same words as at first."

With this parting thrust, I take my leave. Early as is the hour, many of the commercial travellers have already retired to bed; at least, many boots stand outside many doors. As I walk slowly up the stairs, the problem that engages my mind is—

“Wherein can Mr. Le Mesurier’s charm lie ? Ugly—irreligious—dissipated—ill-tempered !” I fall asleep without having solved it. I am awake, or half-awake, by a sensation of being violently called upon and shaken by some one. I sit up and blink : “ I have sung it *twice* already,” I say, irrelevantly, imagining that Mr. Scrope is still pressing me to sing “ Good-night, good-night, beloved,” and is shaking me to enforce compliance.

“ Sung what ? Who wants you to sing ? Wake up, you foolish old person !” cries my sister’s laughing voice. I obey. Broad awake, I look round. The moonlight is lying in silver bars on the floor, having shone through the Venetian blind. A candle glares uncomfortably into my eyes ; and, on my bed, Lenore is sitting, still dressed in her hat and jacket ; her clothes wet with the night-dews, and the steady shining of a great new happiness in

her eyes. "Jemima!" she says, with an excited smile, snatching my hand; "are you awake?—wide? Can you understand things?"

"It is not your fault if I cannot," I answer, drowsily, rubbing my eyes.

"Stop blinking," she cries, impatiently, "and look at me! Do you know that you are looking at the very happiest woman in all France?"

"And you at the sleepest," reply I, lying down again.

"Do not go to sleep!" she says, laying her sweet fresh face, cool with the kisses of the night-wind, beside mine on the pillow. "You do not know what interesting things I have to tell you. Do you know" (in a confidential, emphatic whisper)—"I dare say you will hardly believe it at first—I can hardly believe it myself, yet—but Paul likes—me—*very—much!*"

"Well?" say I crossly, half at my inter-

rupted slumbers, half at the unwelcome, though expected news ; “ there is nothing very wonderful in that ; for the last three weeks you have been doing your very best to make him like you, and your efforts in that line are not generally unblessed with success.”

Her countenance falls ; her tone of gay triumph changes. “ Doing my very best ! ” she repeats, slowly. “ Ah ! that was what I was afraid of. So I have—so I have.”

“ Your friend Paul had no need to see farther through a stone wall than other people, in order to perceive that it was a case of, ‘ Oh, whistle and I’ll come to you, my lad ! ’ ” pursue I, with clumsy badinage.

She covers her face with her hands ; then, lifting it, looks with wistful anxiety at me. “ Did I do anything to make a person *despise* me, do you think ? ” she asks, in a low voice. “ Was I unladylike ? Did I run after him ? ”

“Run after him! Pooh! nonsense!” reply I, carelessly; then, after a pause, meditatively: “Paul! Paul! It is an ugly, abrupt little name. Paul Pry! Paul Ferroll, who killed his wife! Are there any more Pauls? You really must have him re-christened, Lenore.”

“Paul and Virginia,” says Lenore, assisting my memory, having recovered her smiles; “I do not think I am much like Virginia.”

“And do you mean seriously to tell me,” continue I, becoming grave, “that it was with the deliberate intention of asking you to share his exceedingly indifferent fortunes that he took you out on this expedition to-day, in that little dusty tumble-down pony-gig, in the roasting sun?”

“I do not know whether it was deliberate intention or accident,” replies my sister, looking down, and plucking at the clothes. “I rather think it was accident; but whichever it was, he *did* ask me.”

“ And you said ‘ Yes,’ and ‘ Thank you kindly,’ I suppose ?” cry I, reddening with indignation.

She nods assent : “ If I did not *say* it, I *felt* it.”

A little silence : “ You will at least have an excellent *foil*, on all occasions, ready to your hand,” I say, spitefully, in bitter vexation that Damocles’ sword has fallen—that the catastrophe which I have been vaguely dreading for the last three weeks has happened.

“ What do you mean ?” (with an absent look). “ Oh !” (with a smile) “ I see ; you think him so ugly ?”

“ Extremely !” reply I, drily.

“ So do I,” rejoins she calmly ; “ I like ugliness.”

“ ‘ Come sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy,’ ”

say I, maliciously, quoting Titania's apostrophe to Bottom.

Lenore reddens. "You are rude, Jemima, and not at all witty."

"He is poor too," say I, with rising exasperation; "unjustifiably poor. I suppose he goes upon the principle that what is not enough for one is enough for two?"

"I suppose he does," she answers, quietly. "I like poverty."

"He is ill-tempered, too," pursue I, eagerly. "Do you remember what a fury he flew into at Guingamp, with that poor garçon who could not understand his bad French when he asked for the time-table?"

"I remember; I like ill-temper."

"And he is also a gourmand," continue I, relentlessly. "Did you notice how thoroughly put out he looked yesterday at dinner, because the galantine was finished before it reached him?"

"Did he? I dare say; I like greediness."

I shake my head, silenced and baffled by this hopeless agreement with all my objections.

"You see," cries Lenore, with a triumphant smile, "that, try as you may, you cannot put me out of conceit with him."

"The point I am trying to arrive at," say I, with a sigh, "is, what could have ever put you *into* conceit with him first? Do not look so angry, my dear child! I am not so wedded to my own opinion but that I am quite ready to change it, if you show me good reason why I should. But—I really do not mean it offensively—but what good qualities of mind or body has Mr. Le Mesurier?"

Lenore springs off the bed, and begins to walk rapidly up and down the room: her little high heels tap-tapping against the carpetless boards. "How you talk!" she cries, angrily. "Do you think that, when a person loves, they pick out this quality

and that, and say, 'This is loveable, and that is loveable, and therefore I will be fond of the person who owns them all?' One loves because one loves—because one cannot help it, and because one would not, if one could."

"Talk High Dutch, or Coptic, you will be quite as intelligible to me," I say, indignantly.

She returns to the bed, and fixing her large bright eyes on my face, "Is it possible, Jemima," she asks, "that in all the many years you have been about the world," (I wince) "you have never had a lover that you cared about with all your heart and soul, for no particularly good reason that you could give either yourself or anybody else?"

"Never," reply I, with rather a grim laugh. "Humiliating as the confession is, I should have thought, Lenore, that you might have known by this time that I never

have had a lover, either that I cared about or that I did not care about ; and I do not think that there are many women of eight-and-twenty that can make that proud boast.”

“ Poor Jemima !” cries my sister, in a tone of the sincerest compassion, taking my hand : at this moment she feels ten years older in experience and emotion than I.

“ Do not pity me !” say I, with asperity ; “ *l'appétit vient en mangeant* : if I had *one* lover, I might wish for more ; but, as things stand, the more I look around me, the more inclined I am to think that ‘ignorance is bliss.’ ”

“ Good-night, Jemima !” says Lenore, stalking to the door with as much dignity as a waterproof down to the heels and a brass candlestick in her hand will permit ; “ I am sorry I woke you ; next time that I come to you for sympathy——”

"Stay—stay!" cry I, vexed at the effect of my words, and yet puzzled how to mend them. Sitting up in bed and stretching out my arms to her :—"Remember, I was only half awake ; I did not quite take it in : I—I—daresay he is very nice when you come to know him." (Lenore pauses with the open door in her hand.) "He looks quite like a gentleman, and—and has the usual younger son's portion—Very good teeth," continue I, laughing awkwardly, and floundering about in search of a possible excellence in mind or body on which to be able conscientiously to compliment my sister's lover. Silence. "I am sure—at least I think—that he will improve on acquaintance."

"It is not of the least consequence what you think !" says Lenore in a fury, banging the door.



CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT THE AUTHOR SAYS.

"The Lord of Nann and his lady fair,
In early youth united were,
In early youth divided were."

"**D**O not you think that we are rather like the Lord and Lady of Nann, engaged yesterday, to be separated the day after to-morrow?"

It is Lenore who says all this: she is strolling along beside her lover down one of the lovely old streets of Morlaix, that the malignant mania for smart new quays, broad bright new thoroughfares, has not

yet swept away. They have been prying into the dim interiors ; climbing unforbidden the dusty beautiful wrecks of carven stairs, up and down which the stately nobles used to pace, in the gone centuries ; and where now only dirty *gamins* roll and tumble, and the clamp of *sabots* comes. Life seems easier here than in England. In the ancient timber-fronted houses people are leaning on the heavy window-sills miles up in air : below, in the street, they seem to have nought to do but to *jaser* with their neighbours, sitting in old carved doorways ; while bright blankets and rugs hung out in the front make a brilliant bit of colour. At almost every house, birds, hung in wicker cages—parrots, canaries. A little child is trotting about in the gutter with a bunch of cherries in its little hand. The sun is beating, blinding hot, on the fine bare new streets, but here the tall friendly houses lean over, storey above storey, so close, to

gossip together, that they intercept his rays.

Lenore has furled her umbrella.

" I do not think that my worst enemy could accuse me of being in early youth," Paul says, with a smile.

" About how old are you ?" asks Lenore, peering up inquisitively at him. " You are one of those baffling sort of people who might be any age, from twenty-five to forty-five inclusive."

" I am halfway between the two ; I am thirty-five."

" You look more, I think," says Lenore, with charming candour ; " I suppose it is that horrid beard."

Le Mesurier does not answer, but he does not look particularly pleased.

" You know I have never yet seen your *real* face," continues she, slipping her hand through his arm. " I have the vaguest idea of what sort of features I am under-

taking ; I shall be like the lady who was so short-sighted that she said she never knew her husband by sight until they married : this appendage must come off before we meet again." She speaks playfully, but in the imperative mood, which has been habitual to her through life.

Paul thinks the imperative mood very good *in a man*, but utterly inadmissible in a woman. "Must it?" he answers, very shortly ; then, with a rather awkward attempt to recover his good humour : "Do not you know what the early Christians said ?—that shaving was a lie against one's own face, and an impious attempt to improve the works of the Creator!"

Lenore thrusts out her fresh lips in a mutinous pout. "I can quote too ; did you ever hear this distich ?" she says, saucily :—

" ' John P. Robinson, he
Said they did not know everything down in Judee.' "

Paul looks grave. He has not read the

‘ Biglow Papers,’ and he particularly dislikes flippancy in a woman. *Men* may be allowed to be a little wicked ; but all *women* should be religious. They have emerged from the old street ; have left behind them the tall slate-fronted houses, nodding to each other over the way ; have left also the gables, the dormer-windows, the strange saint-faces, deftly wrought in wood. They are sauntering slowly back to their hotel through the more modern part of the town. Morlaix lies so prettily ; viaduct, river, churches, peaked houses, all hobnobbing in the hollow, between green hills.

“ What will you be doing this time three days hence ? ” asks Lenore, presently, with a half pensive smile, abandoning the obnoxious subject of beards.

“ Undergoing, probably, a catechism at the hands of my people, as to your merits and demerits,” answers Paul, laughing.

“What will they ask you first about me?” inquires she, with anxious curiosity.

“How can I tell?”

“What points are they likely to lay most stress upon?”

“They will probably,” begins Paul with some reluctance, “wish to know first whether you are of a good family. By-the-by—do not be angry with me for not knowing, but you see I should like to be ready with my answer—are you?”

“Of course,” replies the girl, drily, tossing her head with a jerk. “Came over with the Conqueror.”

“Really?” cries Paul, with an eagerness which shows that, whatever other weaknesses he may be superior to, he is not above that of a sincere *penchant* towards pedigree.

“How do I know?” cries Lenore, impatiently. “Who cares? What does it

matter? Grandfathers do not make a man, or a woman either.”

“ They are rather apt, however, to make a gentleman,” answers Paul, somewhat stiffly.

“ I always tell everybody,” continues she, with an arch smile, “ that we are lineally descended from the poet. I should not mind being great—great—great—granddaughter to ‘ Fair Daffodils.’ ”

“ And are you ?” asks her lover, resigning himself to come down six centuries in his expectations.

“ I have not the slightest reason for supposing so,” answers she, with a careless laugh.

Paul heaves an involuntary sigh.

“ What will the next article be, as shop-keepers say ?” asks Lenore, presently, giving her head an uneasy toss, and with a sort of *swagger* in her voice, which is quite as much the result of nervousness as

of pride. "Whether I have any money, I suppose?"

"Possibly," answers he, uncomfortably.

"And you will reply, 'Not a sou!'" (raising her two hands and letting them fall again with a gesture expressive of utter destitution).

"Exactly."

She laughs maliciously. "How I should like to see their faces! Grandfather doubtful, and pennilessness certain! You would, however, not be *quite* correct; I have several sous—an immense number, in fact. How many sous are there in four thousand pounds in the Three per Cents?"

"As many as in four thousand *out* of the Three per Cents," he answers, laughing.

"A base evasion of a difficult arithmetical problem! Well, sous or no sous, I really have four thousand pounds."

“I am delighted to hear it.”

“Could not you put it into *francs* when you mention it to your family ? It sounds so immense then.”

“I am afraid they would detect the imposture.”

“Jemima has more—a good deal more,” says Lenore, communicatively ; “still, we only make up five hundred pounds a year between us—a fact, however, which we carefully conceal from our acquaintance, having learnt by experience the entire truth of Solomon’s epigram, that ‘the poor, even his neighbour hateth him !’”

They reach the hotel, the empty salon. “It *is* a contemptible *dot*,” cries Lenore, indignantly, flinging down her hat on the floor, and herself on the sofa. “One ought to be superhumanly handsome to induce people to overlook it.”

“It is better than nothing,” replies Paul, with a philosophical, if lugubrious attempt

to look at his beloved's minute portion from a cheerful point of view.

"Four thousand pounds!" repeats Lenore, scornfully. "Not four thousand pounds *a year*—that would be all very well; but four thousand pounds for the whole maintenance and support of a reasonable educated being, with a fine feeling for lace, and a just abhorrence of country boots and thread gloves!"

"And gingham umbrellas!" supplements Le Mesurier, laughing.

"You must know that we are not *all* church mice however," says Lenore presently; "for the credit of the family, I must tell you that we have *some* rich people among us—my sister Sylvia, for instance."

"Your sister Sylvia!" cries Paul, rather aghast. "I had no idea that you had a sister Sylvia, or a sister anything else, except *Jemima*. I suppose *Kezia*, and

Keren Happuch, and a few more, will transpire by-and-by."

"Some years ago she married," continues the girl, biographically. "She is a pretty little cat, with eyes as big as tea-cups; and he—well, he was old enough to be *everybody's* grandfather" (stretching out both arms comprehensively). "He was as bald as my hand" (opening one pretty pink palm), "as fat as Falstaff, as ignorant as a carp, and he had made his money by that yellow grease that they put on railway wheels."

"Good Heavens! how awful! Is he alive still?" asks Paul, nervously.

"That is what I am coming to," continues she, gravely. "In poetic justice he ought to have had creeping paralysis, softening of the brain—anything that would have kept her tied to the leg of his bath-chair for the next twenty or thirty years, as a judgment on her for marrying

him ; instead of which, what happens ?" (Standing before him and gesticulating). " Within four years he is carried off by an attack of apoplexy ! Bah ! what luck some people have !"

" So that is your idea of *luck* !" rejoins Paul, leaning his chin on the back of the chair on which he is sitting astride, and staring curiously up at her ; " to marry a commercial porpoise, and survive it."

" It is to be hoped," resumes Lenore, after a thoughtful pause (marching up and down the little room), " that your people will ask whether I am good-looking. That is the one question to which you could give a really satisfactory answer." She speaks, not with the blushing *naïveté* of a *jeune ingénue*, but with the matter-of-fact calmness of a woman whom early contact with the world has taught the value of the one great gift she has been given.

" If they do not ask I must volunteer the information."

"You might also," pursues Lenore, beginning coolly to check off her accomplishments on her fingers, "hint to them that I dance extremely well—that——"

"My father does not approve of dancing," interrupts Paul, tilting the hind legs of his chair till he nearly topples over.

Her hands drop to her sides, and her great eyes open wide like large blue flowers in the sun. "Not approve of dancing! What a dreadful old man! What can he be made of?"

"If you asked my eldest brother, he would answer 'Cast iron,' judging from his duration," replies he, with a lazy chuckle of amusement.

"And does not he allow your sisters to dance?" asks Lenore, looking thoroughly *dashed* by the insight just afforded her into her future father-in-law's character.

"They may walk through a quadrille, or romp through the Lancers, if they choose," replies Le Mesurier, still laughing at the

expression of his betrothed's face. "I would not be they if they were caught indulging in any wilder mode of progression."

"Poor dears!" ejaculates Lenore, with a sigh of heartfelt compassion. "No doubt, however, they dance like dervishes as soon as his back is turned."

"Is that the course *you* mean to pursue when I forbid you to do anything?" asks Paul in jest, but also most heartily in earnest.

"Undoubtedly," replies she, coolly, looking back at him with defiant gravity. "From the time I could walk alone I can safely say that I have never yet been forbidden to do anything that I did not instantly strain every nerve to do it."

If Miss Herrick expects her lover to show either pleasure or amusement at this proof of her spirit, she is disappointed. He only says "Oh!" and coughs rather drily.

"Parents and guardians, tutors and governesses, *forbid*," continues Lenore, inci-

sively; "one does not hear such an ugly hectoring word mentioned between man and wife."

"I have an idea, however," retorts Paul, quietly, "that one can find such ugly hectoring words as 'honour' and 'obey' in the Prayer Book. I will show you the place, if you like."

"One cannot always take the Prayer Book *au pied de la lettre*," says Lenore lightly. "After all, I dare say I shall be quite as likely to 'honour and obey' you as you to 'worship' me!"

"I do not know that" (rising); "when you have that blue gown on, and a blue ribbon in your hair, and look *meek*, I am not far off it now." As he speaks he takes her two hands in his, and the look that for the moment makes the wise man half-brother to the idiot—that no doubt made even Solomon himself seem but a foolish fellow among his seven hundred charmers—invades his usually shrewd eyes.

"I had that identical blue gown on, the day that you so good-naturedly acted as Frederic's proxy," replies Lenore, demurely.

"Lenore!" says Paul, neither heeding nor hearing her allusion, loosing her hands, and clasping his own round her waist, "I have told you what I shall be doing when I am gone: tell me now what *you* will? I do not want you to promise to look at the moon, or say your prayers, or drink your cup of tea at the very same moment I do, or any such folly, but" (with an impatient sigh) "I—I suppose in this sort of cases we are all pretty much alike, and—do not laugh at me, I hate being laughed at—I should like to be able to say to myself at such-and-such an hour, Lenore is doing such-and-such a harmless thing; if not I shall be sure to imagine that you are up to some mischief."

"Thank you."

"Come, Lenore, what will you be doing the first day?"

“The first day,” says the girl, feeling a vile inclination to be sentimental and tearful, and resolving not to be conquered by it—“The first day I shall lie in bed all day with the window-curtains drawn : I shall refuse all food, however hungry I may be ; hitherto I have not found that love takes away the appetite, and I shall cry noisily, obtrusively, and without intermission.”

“And the second day ?”

“Half of the second day I shall spend in gazing at your photograph—that one of Disderi’s, in which you are sitting with your back to Mont Blanc, looking like a murderer—and the other half in wrangling with Jemima about your attractions : we have already had one or two passages of-arms as to the shape of your nose and the colour of your eyes.”

“And the third day ?”

“The *third day !*” flinging down her head on his shoulder, and groaning honestly,

"the third ugly empty immense day! How *shall* I get through it? Well," (recovering herself, and feeling rather ashamed of her ebullition,) "the third day I may, perhaps, pluck up my spirits enough to enable me to try and wile that handsome, sulky, sleepy Scrope boy into the mazes of a gentle flirtation."

Paul unclasps his hands from about her suddenly, and walks towards the balcony.

"What is the matter now?" cries the girl, half bewildered, half offended; then, breaking into a laugh, as she catches a glimpse of his face: "Good heavens, Paul, how ill-tempered you *can* look when you try! I thought I was a pretty good hand at it, but I'm nothing to you."

"I detest that sort of jokes," replies Paul tersely, turning upon her a thoroughly cross jealous face; "they are not ladylike!"

"But I am not ladylike either," retorts Lenore, flinging up her head and growing scarlet; "did I ever say I was? We *did*

not come over with the Conqueror; we have no more to say to the poet than you have: it is my belief that we are *roturier* to the backbone!"

She is standing beside him, very upright, with her hands behind her: her voice is not *shrill*, it is not its *way* to be so; but it is undoubtedly raised two or three tones above its usual low key: little sparks of fire are darting from her eyes, and her cheeks are redder than the red rose in her belt.

Delightfully handsome as a *picture*, certainly—but as a future wife? "Is it possible that she can have told me the truth when she said that hitherto I had seen only the best of her?" thinks Paul, with a cold qualm.

END OF VOL. I.

BILLING, PRINTER, GUILDFORD, SURREY.





